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A PLEA
FOR THE EDUCATION OF
THE WORKING CLASSES,

THROUGH THE MEDIUM OF
EVENING SCHOOLS
AND
EDUCATIONAL
MECHANICS' INSTITUTES.

BY
A LATE PUPIL OF THE MODEL SCHOOLS,
MARLBOROUGH-STREET, DUBLIN.

"There is the same difference between one learned and unlearned, as between the living and the dead."—ARISTOTLE

"I wonder not much, considering what human nature is, that some should think the education of the poor an *evil*: I do wonder at their not perceiving it to be *inevitable*."—ARCHBISHOP WHATELY.

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THESE ESSAYS

ARE

Dedicated

TO THE COMMISSIONERS OF NATIONAL EDUCATION
IN IRELAND,

AS A SLIGHT TESTIMONY

OF THE

INESTIMABLE ADVANTAGES WHICH

Their Author

HAS DERIVED FROM

THE IRISH NATIONAL SYSTEM OF EDUCATION,

AS TAUGHT IN

THE MODEL SCHOOL

OF THE COMMISSIONERS,

MARLBOROUGH-STREET,

DUBLIN.

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INTRODUCTION.

THE Author of these Essays has devoted many years to the consideration of the subjects to which the following pages are devoted, and the opinions recorded in them are the result of much enquiry and of long, careful and anxious personal inspection.

A thoughtful man has written of a thoughtful book, "There are a hundred faults in this thing," and, doubtless, there may be many faults in these Essays of which the author cannot flatter himself, with the consoling thought, that "a hundred things might be said to prove them beauties;" but he sincerely trusts, that the difficulties he has had to encounter in endeavouring to popularize a correct knowledge of one of the most important social subjects of the time, will be taken into account; and, above all, he hopes that his experiences, hardly wrought out from his own every-day toils, may incite men, whose leisure and whose position in life must give weight to their efforts, to carry out those projects for the amelioration of our industrious poor, the feasibility of which he believes he has made as manifest as their necessity is patent.

Dublin, June, 1855.

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A P L E A,

&c.

ADULT EDUCATION.

AMONG the many means devised to ameliorate the condition of our working classes none, perhaps, contributes more to their moral and social improvement than the opening of Evening Schools.

Had public Evening Schools been in operation twenty years ago, how different would be the state of society at the present day ! We should not have the thousands that we at present find unable to read and write : had we taught adults *then*, they would be more earnest for the education of their children now, and would have prepared for them opportunities of self-improvement that might have saved them from pauperism, and perhaps from crime.

Much, no doubt, has been done for the education of the people since the National System of Education was introduced into this country ; and doubtless, succeeding generations will feel and appreciate its happy effects ; but we are to remember that, notwithstanding the many glorious and successful efforts made to educate the poor, our "laboring multitudes" remain, to a very great extent, in a sad state of immorality and intellectual deficiency. This can be accounted for in a great measure by the poverty or selfishness of parents who, seeing a demand for juvenile labor, accept, through necessity or a desire of gain, even the low remuneration for it ; and remove the child from school, to which, perhaps, he never returns : thus sacrificing, at the altar of slavish toil, a child gifted

possibly by nature with talents which, if properly cultured, would raise him to a position in society that was unattainable by any of his forefathers.* For such, therefore, we see the great necessity not only for Evening Schools, but also for having these schools placed under the management of properly qualified persons.

There are few who do not acknowledge that by the influence of these asylums of morality and instruction, and such these schools would be if properly carried out, the progress of vice may be retarded, haunts of blasphemy and intemperance deserted, the seeds of knowledge disseminated, and a taste for literature and self-improvement cultivated among that class of society who otherwise might have plunged into the dark abyss of crime, for which ignorance affords but too many avenues. The task that is before us, therefore, is to educate,—as far as existing circumstances will permit, those waxing into manhood, or with whom some of its years have already elapsed.

* Children of the laboring classes are employed at an early age—some permanently, others temporarily—at a rate of recompence which, though apparently but trifling, is sufficient for their maintenance, and more than sufficient to induce their parents to remove them from school. It is evident that even the lowest amount of wages which the child of a laboring man will receive—(from 1s. 6d. to 2s. per week) must be so great a relief to the parents as to render it almost hopeless that they can withstand the inducement, and retain the child at school, in the face of such temptation. And this inducement will be almost equally powerful, whether or not there be one where payments from the children are required. It is not for the sake of *saving a penny* per week that a child is transferred from the school to the factory or the fields, but for the sake of *gaining a shilling* or eighteen pence a week; and the mere opportunity of saving the penny by sending the child to a free school would not restrain the parents from making a positive addition to their weekly income, if the absence of the child from school would ensure it.

Many children obtain permanent employment at the age of nine, and all from that age upwards are considered capable of certain kinds of agricultural labor. Indeed, some persons qualified to judge, are of opinion that the business of a farm laborer cannot be thoroughly acquired if work be not commenced before eleven or twelve.

In mechanical employments, labour begins even at an earlier age. Children begin to be employed in factories, in needle-making, button-making, as errand boys—and in various other capacities, some as early as six, others at any time from six to ten. Among the middle classes, children remain longer at school, and the boys become apprentices etc., at the age of fourteen or fifteen. In very few cases—excepting those where the sons are destined for professional pursuits, and placed by fortune beyond the necessity for labour, or proceed to college—is the period of education protracted beyond fifteen. *Mann's Report on Education in Great Britain*, page 9.

It has long been obvious to those acquainted with that state of society which consists of our uneducated laboring classes, that intemperance, and that immorality which proceeds from intemperance, are the predominant crimes to which they fall a prey. Unfortunately no great improvement has been effected among this class as yet, nor have we any assurance that there ever will be, unless men of higher standing and greater weight in society than the teacher take an active part in bringing back the lost sheep to the fold. Unhappily, Philanthropists, in causes like this, are seldom or never to be found in Ireland; and, we fear, under the existing state of things, we can scarcely hope that they ever will.

From the managers of National Schools, however, much may be expected, because they have already accomplished a good deal in juvenile education. Still, in the cause of what may be properly called adult education, much remains for them and for us all to do. To establish Evening Schools, which are the schools fit for adults, in every parish, on a proper system; to secure by the most judicious means a full and constant attendance at these schools, and to manifest our solicitude for the improvement of those pupils who are most anxious for their own progress—would be the first and most important steps for securing a thorough reformation in the social and moral condition of the working classes of our countrymen. No amount of zeal in such a cause should be considered too great, since the consequences of its success are so many boons to society.

By educating the adult, and inculcating in his breast the principles of morality and industry, you save him from the wretched misery and disgrace of the felon's dungeon and the pauper's home. From boyhood he has been inured to labor, and most likely to hardship—his moral as well as literary education neglected—and fitted only for employments where physical strength and animal endurance are required.*

* A child is trained up to working—he is hammered into a hardy laborer, a stout material bone and muscle for the state—this is good so far as it goes: but it is bad because it goes no farther. He is not taught reading, nor religion—above all, he is not taught thinking. He never looks into his other-self; he soon forgets its existence, the man becomes all body, his intellectual and moral being lies fallow. The growth of such a system will be a race of machines, delvers and soldiers, but not men. So much brute physical energy swinging loosely through society at the discretion of more spiritual natures, to whom the education, neglected or perverted in another way gives wickedness

We do not attempt to describe the condition of the instructed and ignorant artizan, but we reiterate what we have stated in a previous part of this paper regarding the great and zealous care evinced in the education of children attending the Daily National Schools; but that to which we wish to direct the attention of the reader is, the education of those who in early youth were compelled, perhaps by the poverty of their parents, to seek employment which would enable them to contribute to the support both of their parents and themselves. For them should our earnest solicitude be enlisted as well as for those attending our day schools.

What we would, therefore, suggest is, that in every parish an evening school be opened under the patronage of the managers of the daily schools situated in the parish, and that some of the most influential gentlemen of the parish be requested to form a Committee, and that the management of these schools be entrusted to none but competent and efficient teachers. We entertain very little apprehension for the success of these schools under such an arrangement as is stated here; and it would render their success still more certain if a preference were shown on the part of employers for the educated operative. Of course this is but a mere suggestion of ours, knowing as we do the difficulty and inconvenience that would be likely to attend such a proceeding, and how unjust it would be to prevent the uneducated, but well inclined operative from providing for the wants of a family, which of course we could by no means advocate. However, in employing boys whose age does not exceed sixteen years, it would have a most admirable effect on their education, if some slight difference were made between those who could read and write, and those who could not. This distinction, however trivial, coupled with a manifest desire in the employer to encourage the spirit of self-improvement in the employed, would contribute most considerably to the elevation of the social condition and to the temporal interests of the latter. This in itself would be a sufficient inducement to them to attend to their own education in the evenings, and endeavour to acquire as extensive a knowledge as possible of the subjects pertaining to their daily avocations.

with power, and teaches the secrets of mind only as an instrument to crush or play with men for their own selfish purposes.—*Wyse on Education Reform*, Vol. I. Page 324.

By these means many of the temptations to evil that bestrew the paths of our laboring multitudes would be avoided, and once the desire for improvement is secured it will be our fault if it does not continue; because, when the seeds of knowledge are diffused among them they are sure to be followed by a spirit of enterprise and a desire for independence: the people will begin to feel that the power of bursting the bonds that fetter them to slavery and toil is placed in their own hands. The smallest amount of education opens avenues to employment on which the wholly uneducated can never enter, and the mind of the instructed artizan or laborer being accessible to the knowledge contained in books, he can always find employment "in his hours of ease," which will tend to the amelioration of his worldly condition and the improvement of his heart. Let him but feel this, let him but know the blessings that flow from a good education, and the evil consequences of ignorance and debasement, a happy reformation of character will set in and become abiding, and conduce, as it must, to prevent—

“———The Widow's tears
And the Orphan's cry of woe.”

How many of the industrious classes say, "if we only knew how to write and read we should be much happier and better off;" and surely if these poor toil-worn creatures were enabled to read a chapter in that Book of Books, which contains a balm for every wound sent by Providence or inflicted by their fellow-man, what a boon would be conferred on them! If, on the other hand, we were duly to consider the great connexion between ignorance and irreligion, and their consequences—pauperism and crime—doubtless we would have long since devised some plan calculated to ensure greater success than has yet attended our efforts to educate our laboring population. But let us now begin, let our greatest efforts and most zealous exertions be directed to the education of this class of our fellow creatures, ere they become too far advanced in years; if not, much apprehension may we entertain of effecting among them any change calculated to further their spiritual or temporal welfare. If we look around among the uneducated working poor, how few do we see that have reached an advanced age; the prime of their life was spent between over laborious toil and excessive debauch—foolishly thinking to repair the fatiguing effects of the former by indulging in the

latter, and thus were they hurried to a premature and perhaps a pauper's grave.*

In Germany and other countries in Europe where the law obliges parents to provide for the education of their children, how different is the state of the working classes ! There, should the parent be selfish enough to detain the child from attending school for the sake of enriching himself with the small remuneration paid for his labor, he is prevented ; and succeeding generations must feel the influence of so just a law.† The parents being educated themselves, they appreciate education too well not to have their children educated also, consequently there is a willingness on their part to contribute to the fund set apart for popular education. In countries where so much attention must be paid to the education of youth, the necessity for Evening Schools does not exist as patently as in those where the education of the child rests solely on the will of the parents. A single glance at the social condition of the Working Classes of both countries will be sufficient to show the happy effects arising from enforcing education among these classes, and the evil consequences of leaving it optional with them as is in these kingdoms.

Inability to pay the school fees cannot now be alleged by parents as a cause, justifying them in permitting their children to grow up uneducated, for too many schools exist, wherein they may receive an education gratuitously and of a very superior

* The aged operative is now almost unknown, his old age is the wrinkle on the brow of youth, cheeks sunk with premature labour, hair grey with juvenile debauch. Neither is he ever young ! his childhood has passed away without a single childish reminiscence—he is initiated in the gin glass almost from his mother's milk, he lives with the practised vices and is pinched with the true misery of grown up men. And if he flies for consolation at home, he has no true home, a wife sickened over with the same wretchedness as himself, giving birth to children dying from their birth, a progeny, numerous, rickety and scarcely able to sustain the burthens of life, till they reach the age when they too shall be devoted at the same altar ! this is the perspective on which his thoughts of the future must rest, this is the inheritance which he is to leave to his country. From this serious error in the *physical* management of his class necessarily flow a series of *intellectual* and *moral* evils.—*Wyse on Education Reform*, Vol. I. Page 324.

† Yet we are told that all Government interference with the education of the people is at variance with sound principle, involving a departure from the legitimate province of the Government. Against this declaration the proceedings of the National Association have been a strong and unwavering protest in the name of liberty and of progressive civilization.—*Public Education*, by Sir James Shuttleworth, Bt. Page 46.

nature. Therefore, when we see so many of our working classes ignorant, we can only attribute it to the indifference of their parents, and the low estimate in which they held the education of their children. But even now we can adopt such measures as may seem best calculated to remove this evil, and prevent the same indifference to education in the rising generation.

The plan that strikes us as the most effectual is the opening of a well conducted class of Evening National Schools throughout the most populous districts, and enlisting in their support the patronage and interest of the most influential gentlemen residing in the vicinity in which they may be situated. We admit that attempts have been made to establish this class of Schools and have failed ; but there is no effect without a cause, and the causes of the failure of these Schools, in Dublin at least, we shall endeavour to explain, and at the same time suggest the means that seem to us best calculated to ensure their future success.

It is greatly to be feared that the failure of these schools is to be attributed to the want of co-operation on the part of those who should evince the greatest solicitude in their promotion, and also to indifference and want of energy in the teachers. Long experience and careful observation justify us in making an assertion which we otherwise would be most careful to avoid. We have already adverted to the great anxiety manifested by the managers of day schools for the education of the children of the poor, an anxiety which must awaken in their hearts feelings of the deepest gratitude in years to come, and entitle, as it does, those gentlemen who labor so energetically in the cause of Popular Education to the respect of all parties anxious for the moral and social improvement of the poorer classes of society. But what we urge is, the necessity of providing for the education of those who have been compelled at an early age, either to seek their own maintenance, or assist their parents in providing for that of their families, whilst by this means they are prevented from availing themselves of the opportunities which our daily National Schools afford for their improvement.

The managers of most, if not all, the National Schools in Dublin are clergymen whose influence, if brought to bear on the adults of their parishes, could not fail to secure the fullest

attendance.* None can promote education among our laboring poor so much as the clergy, for once their interest is enlisted in the education of their flock, very little is to be feared for its success, and in no country is this more strikingly exemplified than in Ireland.

What we require therefore, is the co-operation of managers, united with that of other influential gentlemen, anxious to promote education among our industrious poor. Could this be effected, we have every reason to believe that most satisfactory improvements would soon be visible in the moral and social condition of the latter.

We are not at all surprised at the want of success that has marked all the efforts hitherto made to educate the working classes of this country, when we reflect upon the small amount of energetic influence that was exercised in its behalf, and the miserable salaries given the teachers for this purpose, which but half stimulated their efforts, and made them indifferent to the success of so laudable an undertaking. That such is, and has been, the case, the failure of evening schools alone affords sufficient proof. Another cause to which we may justly attribute the failure of our efforts to promote education among this class of society, is the fact of having the same teacher to discharge the duties of both day and evening Schools. Any person acquainted with school teaching knows, if justice be done the pupils during the day, the teacher must necessarily be too fatigued to resume the still more arduous duties of an Evening School a few hours afterwards. We hold, therefore, that no teacher should be allowed to exercise the duties of both schools, and, indeed, such is the opinion of those most competent to judge on matters pertaining to education. Knowing from experience how injurious such an arrangement has proved to the cause of Adult Education, we feel justified in urging its discontinuance, and in recommending that teachers be selected whose business would be to educate our working classes only. This, no doubt, would create additional claims against the funds of the Commissioners of Education, but so trifling, that it should not form an objection to an arrangement being made, calculated, as the one proposed is, to

* The clergy have their duty to perform, but they have also their rights. The most important branch of education belongs to them, they ought to be reciprocally associated in its general direction and support.—*Wyse on Education Reform*, Vol I. Page 270.

promote the advancement of the operative classes in those departments of literature most conducive to their interests and social improvement,

The want of an effective "teaching power," has also contributed to the failure of Evening Schools in Dublin: we must state that, with one single exception, we have never seen in any of these schools, what we could term an efficient staff of teachers. The consequence was, that the adult pupils requiring more attention than could possibly be given them, left, and in leaving, spread the report abroad, that proper attention was not paid them, thus injuring both the character of the teacher and the school.

We have now stated what to us seem the true causes of want of success in the Evening Schools of Dublin; and though there may be many divisions of opinion on the subject, yet we feel convinced that were these causes removed, the result would be, that these schools could compete in success with the daily National Schools of our city, and most materially advance the education of our labouring poor.

Having stated that we would suggest the means that appear to us calculated to remedy the defects of the system at present adopted in conducting Evening Schools, we now proceed to do so, and for this purpose we deem it expedient first to offer a few observations on the qualifications and duties of the teachers to whose charge those schools should be confided.

Besides their literary attainments there are other qualifications which we hold to be of great importance in all teachers, but especially in those conducting Evening Schools attended by pupils who, perhaps, have already attained the age of manhood. They require to have a knowledge of the social condition of such pupils, and also of the nature of their different employments, in order to instruct them in those subjects most likely to conduce to their advancement in life. Adults require to be treated very differently from children; and this it is which leads us to believe that the system on which our daily National School is conducted, is not at all calculated to succeed in an Evening School. In the first place, that passive obedience which is yielded by a juvenile pupil, can never be expected from an adult, nor should a teacher demand it. Every teacher, who has had any experience in conducting Evening Schools, will admit how imprudent such a line of conduct would be; he must be aware of the unpleasant consequences that enforce-

ing obedience generally entails. We would strongly urge that teachers appointed to the management of Evening Schools, should divest themselves of that imperative tone of voice, and set aside the airs that so frequently mark the man of petty authority, and assume that frank and easy manner which characterizes the man whose education consists, not merely in BOOK LEARNING, but in a knowledge of the world also. They should be affable and kind to their pupils when imparting instruction, for many of them being fatigued from the weary toil of the day, if treated with harshness are likely to retort, and bid defiance to the teacher's authority, and from experience we have found that a rebellious pupil meets many others to sympathize with him. Kindness, therefore, should be shown to those pupils, for they must be well disposed and deserving, or they would not be found attending these schools, evincing as they do the greatest anxiety to improve. It behoves every teacher to gain evening after evening, on the affections of his pupils by his kindness and affability, and by conforming himself to their views so long as it does not compromise or interfere with his own authority, of which by the way, he should not be over tenacious on some points. In a school where a teacher governs by affection every thing goes on well. The greatest and most learned teachers have governed their schools in this way, and most gratifying were the results, both in the moral and intellectual improvement of their pupils.* Perhaps this will be found even more necessary in governing adult pupils: in fact we hesitate not a moment in asserting, that it is the *only* way by which a teacher can hope to secure their attendance. In no case is it judicious to resort to corporal punishment; with such pupils it can effect no good, but leads to very unpleasant consequences. Adults see their own interest as clearly as a teacher does his; they have already experienced the many disadvantages arising from the want of

* The teacher knows little of his profession if he does not understand that no faculty in a child is more powerful than example. Let him be his lesson and it will soon penetrate. Let him, in the intercourse of every day, every hour, seize every avenue to instil by deed the sacred theme. Let him be just and generous, and mild and kind, himself, and he will have already preached, and more than preached, those virtues to his scholars. In the silence of the young heart their unobtrusive voice will be soon heard. He will be surprised by the blossom and the fruit even before he imagines the root has struck. Virtue is to be caught; it infects as well as vice.—*Wyse on Education Reform, Vol. I. p. 242.*

education, and, therefore, require attention, and not punishment, from the teacher; and, if properly dealt with, their anxiety to learn will fully show that their sole object in attending school is to improve themselves. No teacher but one ignorant of the human character will attempt to exact obedience from adults by force. With the adult the teacher's command should assume the nature of a request, and made with calmness and gentleness, yet in a tone expressing a wish to be obeyed. *Suaviter in modo, fortiter in re*, should be the maxim of every teacher. This will not compromise or lessen his dignity, but, on the contrary, gain for him the affection of his pupils, and this once secured, obedience soon follows, and that respect is paid him which neither punishment nor threats could ever enforce. Every teacher should evince solicitude for the improvement of his pupils, but particularly for those whose education has been neglected in early youth. It is surprising, and argues well for the character of the Irish, when we observe the gratitude and respect with which a pupil in after life speaks of a teacher who has shown himself *really* interested in his education. We could here record, did time or space permit, numerous instances that have occurred indicating the gratitude of the Irish to their teachers, which, if equalled, have never been surpassed in any other country. We would have teachers to remember that pupils have their "Public Opinions," and not only among themselves is this opinion maintained, but we regret that it too often happens that parents and guardians are influenced by it, for we frequently see them remove the child from school because the teacher has incurred the displeasure of the latter. With adult pupils this "Public Opinion" is calculated to serve or injure the character of a school most considerably. The questions generally put by an adult about to attend an Evening School, to another who has already attended the same school, or who may know others that have, are—*Is it any good? what sort of a man is the teacher? Is he a good teacher? &c. &c.* Now upon the answers given to these questions depend the attendance or non-attendance of the interrogating adult, or, in other words, on the Public Opinion held relative to the school by those adults, who either have attended themselves, or have heard the opinions of those who were pupils.

Every teacher who has had experience in adult education must be aware of what is here stated; and as the "Public

Opinions" of pupils affect the interest of the school, we would recommend not only teachers of Evening Schools, but teachers of all schools to enlist the "Public Opinions" of their pupils in their favor, for by doing so they are establishing their own popularity and attaining a character for themselves and their schools.—The best plan that can be adopted to effect this is to treat the pupils more as a parent would his children, than as such men generally treat those placed under them.

Having premised so far what we consider important qualifications for those allowed to exercise the duties of a teacher in an Evening School, we shall now proceed to mention the subjects which they should not only be thoroughly acquainted with, but possess a method of imparting to the adult that they may be rendered lucid and interesting. The subjects belonging to an elementary education are those required most by pupils attending an Evening School, therefore to the teaching of these subjects should the teacher pay particular attention. If we can give the adult a sufficient knowledge of the elementary branches, that will place the power in his own hands should he feel inclined to prosecute the study of those of a more advanced nature, we do as much as can reasonably be expected from us. Every adult should be taught Spelling, Reading, Writing, Arithmetic, the outlines of Grammar, and the Geography of his own country at least. This is a very simple but a very useful course, and if effectually taught, the teacher has done his duty with justice to the pupil and credit to himself. There are other subjects to be mentioned hereafter, which if time and circumstances permitted, their introduction would add materially to the character of the school. But having stated what appear to us the *essential* subjects that should engage the attention of the teacher, we beg to offer a few suggestions on the methods of teaching them. Of course we do not here pretend to offer more than a suggestion, knowing the many admirable plans at present adopted by competent and experienced masters to whom the subject of teaching is more familiar: however, having seen the systems we are about to describe carried into practice effectually, and believing them superior to any others at present in use, we should consider it a neglect of duty on our part were we to omit mentioning them here.

In teaching Orthography, the method we propose to be adopted is, to have the adult to write on some subject, and the

more familiar the subject is to him the better ; or to desire him write down some of the principal events he remembers to have taken place in the country within the last month, year, or any period of time the teacher may wish to mention. Now adults take the greatest interest in such exercises, and do all in their power to vie with each other in expressing their ideas in the best manner they can. There is scarcely any lesson at which the spirit of emulation is carried to such a pitch, or which receives more of their attention.

Objections to this system may be urged on the grounds that it does not effect enough ; we admit this, but if it effects *something* it answers our purpose. We are aware that we do not add to their stock of words, but if we are not doing that we are teaching them how to spell those words with the meaning of which they are already acquainted, and how to arrange them in proper order. The teacher may, at the same time, introduce words better adapted to express the same ideas where he sees it necessary. By this system it is clear that the pupil is being taught easy lessons on composition or indeed we might term it, *natural* composition, for we suppose him ignorant of the rules and principles of grammar. It does not occur to us that there is any other disadvantage attending the system stated here, but that to which we have just referred, and to remedy this the master has only to teach Orthography by Dictation. "It is simply this," writes Dr. Sullivan ; "the teacher reads a sentence from a book or dictates one composed by himself, to the pupils, who either write it down verbatim, or merely spell the words as they occur as if they were writing them down." By these means, the pupils may write down words whose meaning they do not understand, and perhaps words they never heard before ; it remains then for the teacher to explain to them the meaning of such words and correct any mistakes that he may find in the Orthography. We hope that our suggestions in teaching this subject may meet the approbation of and be adopted by those teachers who are sending from their schools day after day, to fill respectable situations in society, pupils sadly deficient in this most essential branch of education. It is to be regretted that even in what are termed *respectable academies* the old system of making a pupil get by heart a column of words and repeat them *Parrot-like* to the master, is still continued, a practice that should be discountenanced by every intellectual teacher.

We are happy to state that in the National Schools of Ireland, this ridiculous and stupid system is not permitted, but by means of that valuable little work, *The Spelling Book Superseded*, by Dr. Sullivan, a system of Orthography is taught that bids fair to render the pupils of these Schools superior to most others in this most useful branch of learning. We strongly recommend this book to the parents and guardians interested in the education of children, and we certainly feel no hesitation in asserting, that the system for teaching Orthography laid down by the author is one that every teacher should adopt.

Teaching reading to the adult pupil is a tedious and difficult task, perhaps there is no instance where the teacher's patience is so strongly tested, and he must be a *teacher* and not a mere scholar who will accomplish it. The plan we should suggest to be adopted in teaching this branch is, to make the pupil put together every little group of words that makes *sense*, and when he has spelled them some few times over, to ask him when he has gone through a sentence in this way, what he understands from it. This is an arduous and monotonous task no doubt, and one that can only be effected little by little, and by proceeding steadily and slowly along. To an intellectual teacher, various plans will suggest themselves, we will therefore leave him to adopt any one that he thinks best calculated to suit the faculty of the pupil, submitting our own merely for his consideration. Adults having but little time to devote to literary acquirements, it should be the business of every master to teach them what is really *practical* and of the most service to them in their various stations of life. Now when teaching them to write, after teaching them to form the letters of the alphabet, we would suggest that they should be then taught to write their names. This will be doing more for them than could be accomplished by many lectures from the writing-master. When able to write small-hand in a legible style they should be taught to draw out an account in a proper and business-like manner. This is sure to receive their greatest attention, for they have already learned its utility, and felt the great disadvantage of not being able "to make out a bill," as they say themselves. We now suppose the adult competent to write from dictation, in which he should be exercised at least twice a-week. On the remaining evenings we would

strongly recommend *letter writing*; it will be found to afford an instructive and most useful exercise. By adopting this plan the master will give the adult *practical* and *really useful* knowledge, which should be the object of every teacher anxious to raise the character of the operative poor. In Arithmetic let the pupil be first taught those rules that are *indispensable* to his business in life, and let him be taught them *well*. Let him be given none but *practical* questions of which others of a similar nature are likely to occur in the business of every day life, and not such as he may never again hear repeated except by the teacher himself. Notation and Numeration should be well understood by the pupils before other rules are introduced, or his knowledge of Arithmetic must necessarily be defective, and the farther he advances in this science the more unwilling will he be to return to these rules, for he looks upon learning them then as commencing the elementary branches again. In many schools we find these rules sadly neglected.

English Grammar is a subject in which we cannot expect an adult to make great progress, as he considers other matters of more importance to him. His opinion on this point is indeed very correct, and we would therefore recommend teachers of Evening Schools not to devote too much time to this branch if they find their pupils deficient in others more essential. However, we hold that every pupil who can read tolerably well should be acquainted with the parts of speech, and know how to connect subjects—Verb and Object, and Preposition and Object together, in order to understand *properly* what he reads.

Geography affords, and particularly that of their own country, a most interesting lesson to adults. We know of no plan so effective as that of teaching by means of outline or sketch-maps. The natural features of a country are so engrafted on the mind by these maps that they are never forgotten, and the pupil is ever afterwards familiar with the position of every principal town, mountain, river, and lake, of the land that gave him birth. In Prussia, and many other States on the Continent, every pupil is obliged to know the Geography of his own country, and indeed were that plan adopted in these kingdoms, we should not have so many pupils unable to tell the source of the Shannon, though at the same time conversant with all the particulars of the Ganges.

We recommend masters, when teaching the geography of any country, to sketch the boundaries first, and make the pupils acquainted with the outline and principal features, so that when they come to be taught from the regular maps, they may be able to tell at once the names of the principal cities, mountains, rivers, and lakes, without waiting to read their names. By teaching Geography in this way it becomes an intellectual and an interesting subject, and not a mere wordy exercise, as it is in many of our private academies at the present day.*

* Mr. Mann thus describes a Prussian teacher instructing according to this plan.—

The teacher stood by the black-board, with a chalk in his hand. After casting his eye over the class to see that all were ready, he struck at the middle of the board. With a rapidity of hand which my eye could hardly follow, he made a series of those short diverging lines or shadings employed by map engravers, to represent a chain of mountains. He had scarcely turned an angle or shot off a spur, when the scholars cried out, Carpathian Mountains, Hungary, Black Forest Mountains, Westernburgh; Giants' Mountains, (Riesin Gebirge) Pine Mountains, (Fichtel Gebirge,) Central Mountains, (Mittel Gebirge,) Bohemia, &c. &c.

In less than half a minute, the ridge of that grand central elevation which separates the waters that flow north west into the German Ocean, from those that flow north into the Baltic and south east into the Black Sea, was presented to view,—executed almost as beautifully as an engraving. A dozen crinkling strokes made in the twinkling of an eye represented the head waters of the great rivers which flow in different directions from that mountainous range; while the children almost as eager and excited, as though they had actually seen the torrents dashing down the mountain sides, cried out, “Silesia,” “Metallic Mountains,” “Danube,” “Elbe,” “Vistula,” “Oder.” The next moment I heard a succession of small strokes or taps, so rapid as to be almost indistinguishable, and hardly had my eye time to discern a large number of dots made along the margin of the rivers, when the shouts of “Linz,” “Vienna,” “Prague,” “Dresden,” “Berlin,” &c., struck my ear. At this point in the exercise, the spot which had been occupied on the black board was nearly a circle, of which the starting point or place where the teacher first began, was the centre; but now a few additional strokes round the circumference of the incipient continent, extended the mountain ranges, outward towards the plains—the children calling out the names of the countries in which they respectively lay. With a few more flourishes, the rivers flowed onwards towards their several terminations; and by another succession of dots, new cities sprang up along their banks. By this time the children had become as much excited, as though they had been present at a world making; they rose in their seats, they flung out both hands, their eyes kindled, and their voices became almost vociferous, as they cried out the names of the different places, which, under the magic of the Teacher's crayon, rose into view. Within ten minutes from the commencement of the lesson, there stood upon the black board a beautiful map of Germany with its mountains, principal rivers and cities, the east of the German Ocean, of the Baltic and Black Seas, and all so accurately proportioned, that I

We have now offered our suggestions on teaching the elementary subjects, and proceed to write on the more advanced branches that should, if possible, be taught in Evening Schools—they are but few, viz., Book-keeping, Practical Geometry, Mensuration and Mechanics. In teaching Book-keeping to adults, who as we have already stated, can devote but a short time to study, we would recommend the little treatise written on this subject for the use of the National Schools in Ireland. It is an excellent work and exceedingly simple. It may be urged that it does not contain sufficient matter, but to this objection we would reply—it does not pretend to teach more than is sufficient to *prepare* the pupil for the counting-house, and give him a general and practical insight into the subject. For these purposes it will be found perhaps the most useful treatise that has as yet appeared, and we have no doubt that in teaching adults, it will be found superior to any other, from its perspicuity and simplicity. The work on Mensuration, issued by the Commissioners of National Education in Ireland, is a most excellent book. It contains a course of practical Geometry admirably calculated to aid the working artizan in the improvement of his craft. Mechanics is a subject of great interest to the aspiring apprentice of the present day. Teachers, if possible, should provide themselves with a model of the steam engine, and make their pupils as conversant as possible with its mechanism, for which purpose a knowledge of mechanics will be found essential. We have now enumerated the subjects which we think comprise the most useful course that possibly could be taught in a school intended for the education of the working poor.

think only slight errors would have been found, had it been subjected to the test of a scale of miles. A part of the Teacher's time was taken up in correcting a few mistakes of the pupils; for his mind seemed to be in his ear as well as in his hand; and notwithstanding the astonishing celerity of his movements, he detected erroneous answers and turned round to correct them. The rest of the recitation consisted in questions and answers respecting productions, climate, soil, animals, &c., &c. Compare the effect of such a lesson as this, both as to the amount of the knowledge communicated, and the vividness, and of course the permanance, of the ideas obtained, with a lesson, when the scholars look a few names of places on a lifeless atlas, but never had their imaginations abroad over the earth, and when the Teacher sits listlessly down before them, to interrogate them from a Book in which all the questions are printed at full length, to supersede on his part all necessity of knowledge.

A teacher possessing the qualifications we have indicated, must be fairly remunerated, or he will not devote his time to the tedious and laborious duties of an Evening School. The poor salary given at present, renders it impossible to procure the services of competent and energetic masters to conduct these schools. With very few exceptions does the grant to Evening Schools, in connexion with the Board of National Education in Ireland, exceed £5 per annum. This sum, with the receipts of the school, comprise the salary of the teacher, which, including both, does not exceed, save in a very cases, £12 per annum. Even this sum is considered by many to be considerably above the average. It is obvious, therefore, that no competent teacher will undertake the arduous task of conducting an Evening School efficiently, for so small a salary as this. Consequently we find these schools directed by masters, fagged and fatigued from the effects of teaching during the day—their energy completely spent, and requiring rest or recreation much more than additional toil. There is no alternative; the salary given would not compensate a teacher if he were to devote his time exclusively to an Evening School, and under such circumstances it is better that trained teachers however fatigued, should be entrusted with their management. But certainly a change in the system is much to be desired, for so long as the present plan is continued little hope can be entertained that Evening Schools will effect the object for which they were intended. Indeed it is, and ever has been, our opinion, that until we have a body of efficient, energetic, and qualified teachers to conduct these schools, adult education can never be advanced beyond its present wretched state. But surely not for ten or twelve pounds per annum, are we to hope to procure the services of the master required. We must therefore expect to witness the decline of these admirable schools, until the salary of our daily school teachers is such as will raise them above the necessity of resuming the weary task of instructing in the evening, and a proper remuneration given to a competent master who will undertake the task—teachers whose vigor and energy have not been impaired nor diminished by previous toil.* There is, perhaps, no country in the world

* If this were the country it boasts itself to be, if it were a country in which the public really aspired to elevate the human mind, to assign intellectual superiority its proper station, long since its laws would have regarded the profession of teacher, as one in great degree invested with

where a teacher is so poorly recompensed as in Ireland, or where some provision is not made for him in his old age by the state, but in Great Britain. He is miserably paid for his labor when life is in its prime; and the only prospect he sees in perspective at its decline, is the work-house or the pauper's grave. Contrast this with the treatment and the respect Schoolmasters receive in other countries. Throughout Germany no profession is more respected than that of a teacher; not only is it respected, but he rests secure that he will be provided for when incapacitated by illness or old age, to exercise his duties; but still more, if found deserving, his widow and orphans will be provided for also.*

paternal and religious rights. If there be many instances in which Teachers themselves have derogated from this dignified position, and converted what ought to have been the most important of social duties into a mere trade, it is only the natural result of our unwise and niggard legislation, and belongs not to the profession nor to the men.—*Wyse on Education Reform*, Vol. I. Page 292.

* Mr. Kay in his admirable work, "The Social Condition and Education of the People," thus speaks of the Austrian Teachers. The Teacher is protected from neglect, insult, or injudicious interference, while he is at the same time kept under a wholesome check. His close connection with the emissary of Government of the empire gives him a standing among his neighbours, and covers himself and his office with the respect of the people. The Austrian Government has indeed so strongly felt the importance of making the teachers respected, that one of the laws expressly requires the Overseer to address the teacher at the Public examination with the Title of Mr. and Sir, and forbids the overseer to allow himself to treat the Teacher with any undue familiarity or carelessness before his pupils.

Besides these wise enactments, a series of laws has been framed, by which a pension and livelihood is secured to every superannuated teacher, and to the Orphans and Widow of every deserving Teacher who dies in the public service. These enactments are for the most part similar to those which I have already described as in force in Prussia.

By these means the Teachers are released from all anxiety about providing for the support of themselves in old age, or of their families in case of their own decease, and are, consequently, freed from any temptation to divert any of their thoughts from their school duties to mercantile, or money-making pursuits, and are enabled to devote the whole of their faculties, thoughts, and energies to the duties of their profession.

Besides these advantages, the people are by these different regulations impressed with a high consideration and respect for the profession, as they see it an object of the anxious solicitude of the Government. They know that the Teachers must be learned men, or they could not have gained their situations, and that they must be men of high character, or they would not be allowed to hold their offices. They see the Teachers in continual correspondence with the agents of the imperial Government. They see how respectfully the teachers are treated by the overseers and civil magistrates.

We are now, perhaps, diverging from the subject before us, but we hope at a future period to advocate the cause of National Teachers, and to show the great injustice done those whose lives have been spent in educating the poorer classes of our fellow subjects.

What we are now to consider is, the remuneration that should be given to an efficient and properly qualified teacher charged with the management of an Evening School. The time generally devoted to these schools we admit is short, perhaps too much so; but, on the other hand, when we take into account the fatigue of adults consequent upon the toil they have undergone during the day, it might not be prudent to make the time for study much longer than is devoted to it at present. Three hours we think should be the maximum, say from 7 until 10 o'clock each night, during which time the teacher requires to be *energetically* and *constantly* employed to do justice to his pupils. Now in the most economical point of view we consider him entitled to a salary of at least £60 per annum, and any sum under that is not sufficient to compensate him for the duties that devolve upon him, if he *really* interest himself in the education of his pupils. This salary may be objected to on the ground that many teachers of Day Schools have not salary equal to it; with this we have nothing to do, as we are to suppose their merits do not entitle them to it, or that there are not sufficient funds placed at the disposal of the Commissioners to reward them, which we believe is really the case. The school fees should be assigned to the teacher and form part of the salary here mentioned. We hold this to be an excellent plan, since it must serve to stimulate the teacher to procure a good attendance to the school; but in any case the salary above mentioned should be secured to the teacher.

The payment by pupils should be insisted upon, for there is no pupil who will present himself for admission to an Evening

This respect reacts upon the children in the most beneficial manner. They see the Teachers welcomed at home, honored by the agents of the imperial Government, cared for by the Government in sickness and old age, comfortably lodged, and treated by every one with respect.

This begets in the minds of the scholars a respect for their instructors, makes them pay attention to their advice and instruction, makes them anxious to win their good opinion, and thus gives a double weight to all the counsels, advice and admonitions of these excellent monitors.

It is impossible to exaggerate the value of the labours and of the influence of such a body of men working among the poor.

School who cannot afford to pay—and were adult pupils admitted free, they would not appreciate the instruction given to them, no matter how superior might be its nature. This is the case in Ireland at all events, however different it may be in other countries. Out of the smallest means, the Irish are ever willing to pay for education.—It may then be asked, why there are so many uneducated adults among the operative classes, if the Irish are so willing to pay for education? Our only answer to this question is, that either the poverty of the parent, or the negligence of the child is the cause. However, no advantage should be taken of their willingness to pay, since we know in many cases it exceeds their ability. A rate of payment within the reach of the poorest adult should be laid down; we would recommend that such a scale of payments be adopted as would be in proportion to the circumstances of the pupils, and at the same time so moderate as to be within the power of the poorest to pay.—By adopting this course an accumulative scale of payments inevitably takes place; but we would strongly urge that this scale should not be regulated *according to the subjects taught*, for every person acquainted with the organization or management of a school must be aware that such an arrangement has a very injurious effect on the progress of the pupils and on the working of the school. By way of example, in support of our views in this matter, let us suppose two pupils placed side by side in the same class, the parents of one being better to do in the world than those of the other; now, both are sufficiently qualified to enter a class where the course of instruction is carried further, but in order to enter this class a higher fee is to be paid. To the pupils whose parents are able to pay the fee there can be no difficulty, for parents willingly pay for the education of their children when circumstances permit; but the pupil whose parents are unable to pay the fee demanded, remains behind, not for incompetency or want of intellectual qualifications, but solely on account of his parents' *poverty*. All will admit that poverty is no crime, but few will deny that it is a misfortune, and certainly debarring the talented child of the poor man the means of raising himself from the lowly state in which he is placed by the circumstances of his parents, is not the mode by which to imbue him with a spirit of nationality or independence; on the contrary, it tends to depress this spirit and to make poverty hereditary.

We regret that in many schools receiving public aid the fees are regulated according to the subjects taught, a system both unwise and unfair, and one we would strenuously oppose, for we hold that in no schools supported by the State or by other public endowments, should such a system be tolerated.

The teachers of these schools are public officers and should make no distinction between their pupils while discharging their duties in the school-room. All should equally share their attention, and be eligible to any class for which their capacity or proficiency would qualify them. Public or National Schools were provided for the education of the poor, and the State in conferring this invaluable boon on society, never intended a "royal road" to be opened in these schools on which the poor man's child dare not enter.

While we advocate the rights of the poor to National Schools, we do not desire that these institutions should be solely attended by the children of the poor; on the contrary, we are of opinion that these schools should be open to all classes, for the fact of the children of the poor associating with those of the middle classes, has a most desirable effect on both, and contributes most materially to the success and character of the school.* But what we contend for is, that the poor man's child be as eligible to receive instruction in any subject taught in the school as that of the rich man's, though the latter *may pay a higher fee*.

Before concluding this portion of our paper we would wish to suggest, that when teachers receive salary in addition to the school fees, the rate of payment for each pupil should not exceed 2d. per week; and in cases where they receive their entire salary from sources independent of the school fees, the latter should not exceed one penny per week for each pupil. And this payment, we would further suggest, should be insisted upon, for it is desirable that every pupil should pay in a school that is not understood to be a Free School. For the present we have confined ourselves to Evening Schools, but in our next paper we hope to be able to show the great want existing in our Metropolis for such Mechanics' Institutes as those advocated in England by Lord Brougham, and other zealous friends of the cause of Popular Education.

* See Report on the Clonmel District Model School for the year 1850, by James W. Kavanagh, Esq., Head Inspector of National Schools: see also Mr. Frederic Hill's admirable work on National Education.

In closing our present paper, we consider it but just to mention the name of The Right Honorable Alexander Macdonnell, Resident Commissioner of the Board of Irish National Education, to whom the adult portion of the working classes of this city is deeply indebted for the part he has taken in encouraging Evening Schools.—Frequently has he contributed from his private purse to their support, and his benevolence to many a poor and hard-working teacher is too well known to call forth any comments from us. With his name we feel justified in coupling those of Dean Meyler, Commissioner of National Education; and the Rev. Mr. Farrell,* manager of the Andrean Male National School. These gentlemen have been indefatigable in promoting the cause of National Education, and well may they be proud of the signal success that has attended their united efforts in endeavouring to place the schools of their parish on a footing with some of the best organized schools under the Commissioners of National Education. We should not omit mentioning here the name of the Rev. Dr. Flanagan, who for many years supported, at his own expense, an Evening School, which was attended by a very large number of the laboring poor. We regret that this school has been closed for some time, owing to this liberal gentleman's funds being exhausted.

* See Report on the admirably-conducted Ragged School under the management of this gentleman, given in *IRISH QUARTERLY REVIEW*, Vol. IV., No. 16, p. 1237.

MECHANICS' INSTITUTES.

IN the foregoing paper we endeavoured to show of what vast importance properly organized Evening Schools would be to the laboring classes. We also showed, that in proportion to the importance of these schools, is the difficulty in establishing them and of securing to them a considerable attendance. This, we stated, is made manifest in Dublin by the very few schools of this character at present in operation. Having offered every suggestion in our power on the management of these schools, we have done our duty as far as it came within our province. We can only hope, that for the common interests of society, these, or some other suggestions calculated to promote the intellectual and social improvement of the working classes may be adopted, for we should remember

—————“The mind untaught
Is a dark waste where fiends and tempests howl ;
As Phœbus to the world, is knowledge to the soul.”

Before entering on the immediate subject of the present paper, we would ask our readers to bear with us while we examine the classes of adults and boys generally to be found attending the Evening Schools. Our object in this, is to ascertain if these schools are sufficient in themselves to supply the kind of education sought for by the more advanced members of the working classes ; for, if so, we cannot

see the utility of advocating the establishing of Mechanics' Institutes, which may be considered Adult Schools on a larger scale.

Now by enquiring what class of pupils attends Public Evening Schools, and the course of education taught in these schools, we shall find a large proportion consists of those, whose education has been sadly if not wholly neglected in youth, and who are, consequently, learning the mere rudiments of knowledge ; while a small, a very small proportion indeed, is engaged upon the higher branches. It is clear therefore that, under such circumstances, the course of education in these schools can be little more than elementary.

Again, we also know that the Teacher's time must be more or less engaged by the majority of his Pupils, and the majority in the present case consists of those pupils scarcely able to read and write. It is manifest then the minority is neglected, which therefore quits the school, and be it remembered, this minority forms the intellectual portion of the school. They see that they are neglected, they know that the Teacher of an Evening School cannot devote his time to a few and neglect the many. The consequence is, that advanced pupils are scarcely ever to be found attending Evening Schools, and no matter what their anxiety and solicitude may be to perfect themselves in knowledge, there is no opportunity afforded them to do so in these Institutes. It will appear here from what we have stated, that Evening Schools as they are at present conducted in Dublin, are not schools where those who have passed through our primary National Schools may pursue their studies, and in so doing acquire a knowledge of those subjects which their pursuits in life may require. The demand for a higher class of schools or institutes is increasing daily, and will continue to do so till it becomes irresistible. Further, it is our belief, that no matter how efficiently Evening Schools be conducted, they will not be attended by that class of adults whose object is to advance themselves above the mere working man. We may look on these schools as preparatory, and we have little doubt, if properly managed, would become so many feeders to Mechanics' Institutes of a like class. When we write that these schools are merely preparatory, and the course taught in them purely elementary, we do not assume that teachers in these schools possess only the literary acquirements necessary to impart instruction in the rudiments of knowledge ; how

ridiculous would it not be to teach Algebra or Astronomy to a pupil to whom Arithmetic and Geography are only known by name. The advanced branches not being taught argues in no way against the qualifications of the Teachers ; as well might it be said that a man cannot speak French because he happens to speak English. Those acquainted with Evening Schools and the class of pupils attending must know that mere elementary instruction is all that can be expected to be given in them, since the teachings must always be adapted to the capacity of the pupil, yet by this class of instruction much good can be effected among the poor creatures, simple as it be, and could Evening Schools succeed in only doing this, there is no doubt that they would effect the object for which they were intended—to impart education to those who have been debarred its blessings in early youth.

A large majority indeed of the working classes of our city consists of those either wholly illiterate, or those, as has been already hinted, whose education has been sadly neglected : but, from the very nature of things, this majority, we are happy to state, must necessarily continue to diminish, and institutes of a higher order will appear, and the working classes attain a more exalted rank in the social scale than they at present occupy.

We have now shown the portion of the working classes attending Evening Schools, their capacity to receive instruction, and the course of instruction that must necessarily be taught in these schools. We have also endeavoured to prove that these schools cannot be substituted for Mechanics' Institutes. We would next direct the attention of our readers to the more advanced and intellectual class of the Working multitude, and we feel happy to be able to declare, that this class is by no means inconsiderable.—This is the class that is debarred the means of pursuing their studies in the more advanced branches of knowledge, which are entered upon in our primary schools, and hence we find that some of the brightest and most promising of our youths when at school, allow their minds to slumber, and so wax into indifference until at last the bright future which lay before them is darkened and dispelled by their want of progress ; they become reckless—the prospect of toil and sorrow takes the place of the happy manhood, which they have painted for themselves ; want of mental occupation drives them to the ale-house, and thus they are early

made the victims of the many vices that beset the path of young men at their first outset in life.

For the future education of this class, Mechanics' Institutes are required as we have already stated: no matter how efficiently an Evening School may be conducted, they will not attend, knowing as they do, that the course of instruction is merely elementary.—In fact, they would look upon a properly managed Mechanics' Institute in the same light, as a youth in our private schools look upon a University.—The very fact of being a member of such an Institute, would have a mighty influence upon them, and especially if they know it is presided over by those free from sectarian bigotry, and whose only object is to raise their moral and intellectual character.—We agree with the Rev. Dr. Hook, vicar of Leeds, who wisely says:—

“In short, we want for the working classes institutions similar to those which the more opulent, when they quit school, find prepared for them in our Universities. It is astonishing how soon the mind runs to seed, and how quickly, when the waters cease to rise, the well becomes hard and dry. I make no doubt but that there are many who have felt mortification, as I have done, at finding, after the lapse of ten or fifteen years, how some of those children who were at one time the ornament of our schools, have, for want of continued mental cultivation, become as void of intelligence as their worst educated associates. If it is worth while to give an education, it is worth while to take care that the education given is not thrown away. If it is our duty to instruct the children of the working classes, it is equally our duty to afford to adults the means of reaping the advantages of our past labour and youthful industry. The truth of this has been perceived, and attempts have been made to fill up the void of which the complaint is not unfrequent, but the attempt has not been made on a scale commensurate to the requirements of the case. Or if the institutions for adult education at present in existence, be sufficient in number and magnitude for the present wants of the people, the quality of the education provided is lamentably deficient, and the deficiency becomes daily more apparent as the quality of education in our primary schools under trained and certificated masters becomes more effective. To meet the requirements of the case the Mechanics' Institutes were first in the field.—This honor they may claim, and it should willingly be assigned to them.”*

To prove the correctness of what is just stated, let us take, for example, a boy who has graduated from class to class in any Public School, say for instance the Model National School of Marlborough-street, till he has reached the highest class, and not

* “Meliora” 1st Series, p. 25.

only that, but has distinguished himself so much in that class as to merit an appointment as monitor. He continues to graduate in the rank of monitor, until he becomes Head Monitor or Head Pupil Teacher in the School. He is then recalled from school by his parents, apprenticed to some Mechanic, or placed in an office or counting-house. Such a boy desires to advance himself in those branches that apply to the business in which he is now engaged. The spirit of emulation has not as yet passed away, his desire to distinguish himself among men is now his object, to give him an opportunity of doing so is a public duty. All we can do is to offer advantages, which if availed of will stimulate the mind to enquiry, and point out the sources of more minute and accurate knowledge. Let us do what we can to induce him to devote those hours that might be passed in indolence and folly, in attaining a higher end than the mere amusement of the passing hour. It has been said by a wise and good man, "It is our high and holy mission to serve mankind." This we can best do by educating them, for, by the diffusion of knowledge, morality is secured, liberty protected, and the vices avoided which ignorance and idleness engender.

Before we have done with the case we have now before us, we regret to write that frequently have we known many of the most intellectual and promising pupils of our schools, when they left to pursue the callings for which they were severally destined, become the associate of companions whose minds were evil and designing, whose only pleasure was vice, whose haunts, when toil permitting, the public house or gin shop. Example had its effect—the once promising and talented pupil became the prematurely old and dissipated man. What is here mentioned has but too frequently come under our notice, and this it is that has induced us to take up the subject of Mechanics' Institutes, feeling fully convinced that, to the want of such is mainly attributable many of the miseries of the working poor. For had we proper educational institutes awaiting the youths when their school instruction ends, and they begin to follow their various pursuits in life, doubtless many whose leisure hours are spent worthlessly, if not criminally, would be found devoting these hours to mental culture and pursuing those studies congenial to their faculties. To those who have not received an elementary education, their wants can be supplied by Evening Schools; and for those poor persons should those schools be supported, and that too with

no meagre hand, if we desire to remove the thick veil of ignorance from the minds of our working men and enable them to appreciate that liberty which the uneducated can never fully value.

We have described the class of pupils that will not attend Evening Schools, and in doing this, we have stated what appears to us the main cause of their absence. By what we have asserted, it cannot fail to strike the minds of a thinking public, that a great deficiency exists in the means that have, up to this, been adopted to educate the working poor of this country. And it must be acknowledged by those who really think on the subject, that the opening of Mechanics' Institutes is the only way in which this defect can be remedied. But before we examine what the character of these institutions should be, and how they should be conducted, it may be well to anticipate the question that we regret so often to hear asked, by men whom we should suppose would espouse and advocate the cause of the education of the Working Classes; the question we allude to is,—“What use is it for the Working Man to trouble himself about education, more than to know how to read and write?” This question has been often put, but let us ask by whom. Is it not by those whose ideas and faculties of mind extend to the mere ability to add up a column of Pounds, Shillings and Pence? whose minds from morning till night are engrossed with the mercenary thought of wealth, who make riches their god, and to accumulate them, will, through their thirst of cupidity and love of gain, exact the sweat of the poor man's brow with the same eagerness and anxiety as the astute and mercenary Jew will sweat the golden coin to satiate his thirst for the precious metals. Again we hear the same question put by those whose position in society should assure us that they would aid and abet in every way to promote the culture of the mind among the laboring poor,—but such, we regret to write, is not the case; they become jealous that those whom they call plebeians should advance themselves, lest in a few years, by perseverance and mental enterprize, they aspire to, and attain a position for which their own qualification, render them unfit. Doctor Whately, in alluding to this class, thus writes—“Some, again, there are, of the higher classes (in birth and station,) who are jealous of the classes below them treading on their heels, by becoming their equals, or superiors in the literature and science, of which they themselves, perhaps,

possess no great share. This, again, is a feeling which no one is very likely to avow. They persuade, as far as they can, both others and themselves, that what they dread is the unwise, ill-regulated, and indiscriminate diffusion of knowledge."—Knowing the feelings of the two classes we should rejoice to think that their influence on society is weak.—Were it otherwise, how vain would it be for the son of the plebeian to devote his energies for years, perhaps scantily fed and thinly clothed, prosecuting his studies within the peasant's cot, or the walls of some miserable abode in one of our back and secluded streets.

We would wish to ask those who fear or deprecate the diffusion of knowledge among the poor, is it by keeping them in darkness and ignorance that they can best secure the happiness of a people, or the prosperity of a nation? Is it not by doing so superstition and bigotry are engendered, the spirit of anarchy and rebellion fostered, and religious hostility between man and man encouraged? If their object be, as we fear it is, to make the poor the instruments of the rich, to be used by them for whatever purpose they may think proper, we can understand their not considering the education of the poor necessary or advisable. But what a wretched contrast do they form, when compared with such a man as Thomas Wyse, who, showing the necessity for educating the poor thus writes—"Under the most favourable circumstances, the superior whether clergyman or proprietor, can do little with a still brutal and sluggish population. He must begin like Oberlin with first de-brutalizing them; he must awaken the soul before he can make use of it, he must first teach and then civilize. This is true in a greater or less degree, whether we have to deal with Indian or European. It is an indispensable condition of improvement. Education thus becomes not merely a benefit to all, but an object to all of the first necessity." The wisdom and justice of this statement need no comment. Every friend of Education must fully agree with Mr. Wyse on this point; we may justly rank Mr. Wyse among the champions of Popular Education of whom England can proudly boast. As the current of public opinion in favor of this noble project flows on, it is swelled day after day, by the opinions of those who were most adverse to the education of the poor. But we should take care, lest those who come over do more to oppose than to advocate its cause. We cannot be too vigilant on

this point, for, says Archbishop Whately—"I know for a fact, that there are some persons, who deprecate the diffusion of knowledge; but yet they will give in to it, and profess to favour it, merely because they find that they must swim with the stream, because they cannot oppose it. I am continually meeting with persons who are for embarking in the vessel of education, in order that they may be able to retard its course. They are deprecators, above all things, of *too great* a diffusion of knowledge—too much education for the people—too much knowledge for their station in life, which they say, is likely to puff them up."

These are the persons we are to guard against, and, we regret to write, they form no inconsiderable a class in point of number. But as we have already intimated, their influence and power are such that no danger is to be apprehended from them; their opponents are too powerful, the public mind has become too enlightened, the love of knowledge has taken too deep a root, even among the poorer classes, to submit to what they *should* when literature was the privilege of a cloistered few. No, for the plebeian now sees that he lives in an age when his education can compensate for the meanness of his birth, and his industry for his fortune. This is well engrafted upon the minds of the poorer classes, and its effect is manifesting itself day after day among them. They have learned to despise those who would shut them out from the temples of knowledge, and prevent its diffusion among the poor. The State has, more or less, provided education for them, and in doing so, it has only done its duty, but as this duty might no doubt be neglected, we are to look upon it in the light of a favor and feel grateful. It is a wise provision, for by it we are enabled to see with Sir David Brewster that—

"There are men who denounce railways and steam boats, and even the cheap intercourse of minds, and who would willingly doom to penury, or even to gradual annihilation, the industrious millions whose title to existence is as good as their own. These men would cheerfully step back a few centuries to feed on the flesh and clothe in the skins of the beasts of prey, and perchance to offer up their meats to idols, not less respectable than the mammon which they worship."

Whatever may be the objections urged against the Education of the Working Classes, the bounds to which anti-

educationists would limit it, or the restrictions which they would impose upon it, we will not now pause to consider. However we would remind them that, "The man who does not look up is sure to look down,"—this is a short but a very true and pithy saying, and one which, if duly considered, could not fail to exercise a vast influence on the minds of those prejudiced against Popular Education. To afford every advantage to the working portion of the community, to improve their moral and intellectual character, is a public duty, and one that should call forth the interference of the State. Only by educating the laboring multitudes can we safely get them to "look up," and this spirit once engendered and coupled with industry and perseverance, must necessarily tend to elevate them in no inconsiderable degree. "Look up," we would therefore say to the poorest of our fellow creatures, for by doing so you can only hope to reach that ever-to-be-desired goal—independence: on the other hand, "look down," and the pauper's home, or felon's cell, will be the reward awaiting you at life's decline. Every day brings about facts that clearly prove the correctness of both statements; we see the industrious and persevering soar above their class, while the indolent and improvident become the victims of poverty and crime. Education is the best antidote for these miseries, especially for the latter. Those most competent to judge of the matter believe this to be the case. "Where crime was in abeyance," speaks Lord Campbell, "good education existed."* Again, Archbishop Whately, in his address delivered to the members of the Manchester Athenæum says—"Men are liable to be deceived and misled, but it is in darkness more than in light; in twilight more than in full sun, that error is liable to be mistaken for truth."

While fully concurring with such high authorities in their statements on this point, let us hope that something may be done to raise the social character of our toiling poor. And as we consider that this can best be accomplished by the opening of an Educational Institute adequate to their wants, the great necessity for such an institute in Dublin is obvious. The opening of it would be an invaluable boon to the numbers of the working community of our city: that it would be so if properly organized and conducted is a fact too palpable to need demonstration. Why should we fold our

* Speech on National Education, House of Lords, July, 1854.

arms and look on the mechanics and artizans of our cities and large towns, still in ignorance and made the instruments of wily politicians, without aiding them to dispel the dark cloud, enabling them to see into and repair the evils of neglected early training.

It must have been obvious long since, to those acquainted with the character of the working classes of Dublin, that a proper educational institute, that is an institute having for its objects the intellectual improvement of the working man, is not only desirable but indispensable, if we wish to ameliorate his moral and social condition. "To a thinking man," writes the Rev. Mr. Beames, "the condition of the working classes is a subject not merely of interest, but alarm. It has been shown that the proportion of criminals to the honest and industrial classes is increasing; that though our laws are infinitely milder than they were, even thirty years ago, the number of convictions is larger."* In our opinion the education of the working classes is a subject well deserving the attention of the State. In England ample provision is made for it. In Ireland none. In the former it occupies the attention of the noblest of her peers, the ablest of her statesmen, the most learned of her judges, the most scientific of her philosophers. But in Ireland it has few active advocates. These classes have been styled "the pith and marrow" of the people, by a true friend of Mechanics' Institutes, the Earl of Carlisle, whose anxiety and solicitude for the improvement of the working man's condition never tires. "Let," speaks the noble Earl in his address at Huddersfield College, 1843, "education be provided for the heirs of poverty and the children of toil, as a relaxation from the weary hours of labour; let it be provided for them as a solid and sustaining nurture for the intellectual, the moral and the spiritual cravings of nature. And let me give this parting exhortation to you, that within the whole range of your several spheres, according to the best of your abilities, you should promote the united cause of a free conscience and universal education."

Such an exhortation, and coming from such a source, should stimulate the professed friends of Popular Education in this country, to follow the example of the noble earl, and in-

* "Meliora," vol. ii, p. 70.

duce them, as far as in them lies, to provide for the educational wants of the poor Irish apprentice and of the neglected artizan. Were we duly to consider the evils arising from ignorance or want of education, and contemplate the miseries it entails, we surely would not have remained so long indifferent to the social condition of the working poor. Did we afford to the Irish artizan advantages similar to those offered him in the sister country, many an avenue to poverty would have been closed, many an ill-fated marriage would have been prevented, and instead of feeding work-houses, and prisons with poverty-stricken and forsaken offspring, we would be providing for the premature and thoughtless father means of mental culture and enlightenment, which would, in a more auspicious period of life, enable him to acquire for himself and his little ones, a cheerful homestead, secure from the blighting blast of poverty. Whatever may be the divisions of opinion regarding the cause or causes of early marriages, we hold that ignorance is the main and most powerful. Is it not among those who have been debarred the blessings of education in youth, or those whose after education has been neglected, that the majority of unhappy marriages take place; marriages, in whose train follow misery, discord, and but too often abandonment of either parent. We merely allude here to early and improvident marriages, as one of the many evils arising from the neglect of the after education of the working classes, or in other words, indifference to improve the condition in which they have been placed by Providence. As long then as we continue unheedful of, and indifferent to what may be justly entitled the right of every working man, no matter however poor or insignificant he may be, so long may we expect to have an increasing demand for work-house and prison accommodation. And we would further add, that by debarring the working portion of the community the means which properly managed Mechanics' Institutes would afford, we are indirectly aiding to encourage rather than to suppress the spirit of religious hostility still existing among its already formed victims. Bigotry is fast disappearing from among the most enlightened classes of Ireland, and we thank heaven that it is so; but let it not be understood, that among the lower and uneducated portion it is on the decline. No, the bitterest spirit of bigotry is still existing among the poorer of our fellow countrymen; a bigotry that could only issue from a darkened and unenlightened mind, and we fear things must remain in this sad

state if some effectual means be not adopted to bring the Protestant and Roman Catholic artizan to a greater, and more friendly intercourse with each other. Any man acquainted with the character of the working poor of Ireland, must see the necessity for this; and we would state that any professed friend of Ireland, having a true wish to regenerate her, must direct his attention to, and urge the necessity and justice of, educating and enlightening this important body. It has been truly said, "that half our animosities arise from ignorance of each other;" and there can be no doubt that the other half is, in a great measure, attributable to the want of proper education. From ignorance proceeds that spirit of faction and religious hostility among the poorer classes, which has ever been the greatest obstacle to their social and moral improvement. "What years of distrust and dissension, how many generations of misery and crime has it sent forth from its prolific womb. We have seen these things, but have seen them very late. We have attacked the consequence, but the causes are not yet extinguished."* To contribute our aid in removing this cause is now the object of our serious consideration. We therefore propose the opening of Mechanics' Institutes throughout the country, where the necessity for doing so can be shown, clearly and satisfactorily.

In Dublin, the want of a proper Mechanics' Institute has been sadly felt by the working classes, and educationists of every party will admit its need. Perhaps in Europe, there is not a city where the after education of the artizans is more neglected. We could not point out one institute in Dublin affording to the poor mechanic opportunities of acquiring the knowledge suited to his taste, or congenial to his faculties. In fact, the education of the parent is a thing seldom or never spoken of. The laboring multitudes of this city seem too insignificant a body to engage the attention of the educationists of the country, or if they do, there are none philanthropic enough to come forward to advocate the cause of their instruction. It is a vast work no doubt, but it is of vaster importance, vaster than we might at first imagine. Educate the parent, and he will be earnest for the education of his children; offer advantages of continued education to the children now attending our Public Schools, and

* Wycs—"Education Reform," vol. 1.

when they become parents themselves, they will be anxious that their children shall experience the same abiding fruits. What have we done in Dublin up to this for the education of her poorer citizens; we have given them opportunities, doubtless, to have their children instructed in the elementary branches of knowledge for a few years, but after they have left the "friendly shelter" of our schools, their education ceases to be worthy of our notice, or sufficiently important to engage our attention.

"The teacher thinks his duty done the moment the pupil quits the school. His duty is done, but not that of the pupil. The education must be continued. In the upper classes of society this is not difficult. Daily occasions, long leisure, abundant means, provide in most instances for its prosecution. The middle and lower orders are less fortunate. The active and stern interests of life press upon them. Physical wants usurp their own being—intellectual pursuits are overpowered—mere culture is forgotten.

* * * * *

This after education, if so it may be called, is in general neglected, or when applied, it is generally on so limited and local a scale, that its influence is scarcely perceptible. But it is essential. A building does not consist in foundation. If elementary education be justly an object of national solicitude, so also are the means by which this elementary education may be given, through every successive period of life, its full value and efficacy."*

We have allowed the minds of many pupils of our National Schools to sleep, never it would seem to waken. We have done worse, we have not held out any inducement to counteract that of the public house or political assembly. Our school doors were closed against him when the toil of the day was over, though he was still willing to prosecute those studies upon which he had already entered, while attending our national and other public schools. The leisure hours should be employed, and in the majority of cases how were they devoted? We speak from conviction when we assert, that they were devoted to anything but advantage to himself or to mankind. We have seen many who were justly considered the most promising pupils when at school, become degraded members of society, bearing the brand of the drunkard and vagabond—being contaminated by those who considered themselves their equal as regards social position, and would laugh them to

* Wyse on "Education Reform," vol. I., p. 289.

scorn were they to manifest an intention or a desire to soar above their class.

Our experience of the character of tradesmen of the old school, who boast of still pursuing the craft of their fathers and grandfathers, justifies us in offering these opinions. These men view with no very friendly feeling those of their class who attempt to rise above the position of their parents. The young aspiring mechanic is an object of envy to those who are either too indolent or too incompetent to make one step in improving their condition, beyond putting in, as they say themselves, an *extra quarter day* of animal labor. The character of the working classes cannot be arrived at by mere cursory observations, we must have intercourse with them, we must hear their opinions from their own lips on matters that concern them or bear upon their interests. Still further, we must not deem it beneath us to hold friendly intercourse with them, and now and then to concur with them, in their opinions on many points where neither integrity nor truth is compromised. There is more sincerity and more unsophisticated honesty in one warm shake-hands of an honest and "hard-handed" mechanic, than in a thousand of those patronizing ones which we so frequently see given by those in high station to the man of intrinsic worth. How frequently do we see even the teachers, whose duty it is to encourage a desire of education among the working classes, pass by and consider their most industrious and intellectual pupils beneath them. Feeling that we are in some measure competent to judge on this point, we would state, that unless those teachers descend from their *imaginary* high position (and this they can do and be really greater men and more useful members of society), and become more acquainted with the condition and characters of the toiling poor, any attempt of theirs to educate parents or grown adults would be absurd. We do not think the term *absurd* too strong, for we are led by long experience and conviction to give an opinion upon matters respecting the condition and social character of this class of the community. In Dublin, at least, our experience of the intellectual and social condition of the operative classes, is in some degree considerable. Many of the married members of this body can never be educated, no matter what means may be devised to diffuse knowledge among them. We must, therefore, be at rest about these, and do all that we can to prevent

another such generation appearing among us. In England every means is taken to effect this, while in Ireland it forms but a secondary consideration. It is true, as we have already stated, much has been done and is doing for juvenile education, but why not provide liberally for adult education also? Should we not regret that in such a city as Dublin not one Public Educational Institute exists, affording advantages to the young apprentice or grown adult adequate to their wants. "Perhaps," writes Mann, "the most extravagant expenditure of funds and efforts in erecting, and supporting, and improving elementary schools, would have but small effect in lengthening school attendance, in comparison with that which would result from half the labour and expense applied to bring within the reach of those emerging from the school, the means of cultivating as a pleasure intellectual occupations, which in school they followed as a task." We admit that there are many practical difficulties in the way of the satisfactory success of adult education, but we also insist that these difficulties can be surmounted; and farther we would assert, that not only can these difficulties be overcome, but most satisfactory results produced if proper and judicious means be employed. We again repeat what we have already stated, that little, very little indeed, has been done in the department of adult or continuous education as far as Ireland is concerned. The obstacles to it are few, the advantages to be derived from it are many, and the necessity for it too evident to need demonstration. Apprehension seems to have been felt by many educationists, not as to the necessity or importance of the education of the laboring classes of Dublin, but as to the impossibility of getting these classes to attend, no matter what might be the opportunities afforded them for intellectual improvement.

Well, every great undertaking is attended with proportional difficulties, and we will agree with those entertaining the apprehension on this point so far as to admit, that we have many obstacles to surmount before we can succeed in bringing about results that would compensate for the trouble and amount of money that must be expended in the task. But, on the other hand, we hold the education of the working poor to be a matter of sufficient importance to induce us to make a trial; and knowing well that the thing is *practicable* and only requires enterprise, energy, and a well organized system to remove the obstacles in the way, we urge the undertaking, and in doing

so we feel we are discharging a just debt which we owe to the industrious and well-disposed classes of Ireland. The present state of the society in Dublin, composed of these classes, is favorable and auspicious; the tendency to seek for knowledge suitable to their occupations or callings in life is every day increasing, and we declare, no matter how confined they may be by the duties of such, still they exhibit a desire of devoting the little leisure at their disposal to the acquisition of that knowledge which they believe will make them more respectable and more happy. Opportunities for the acquirement of such knowledge they should have, and from no matter what source the support of organized and judiciously managed institutes should come, we hold it to be a duty incumbent upon us to provide them. We should provide for the moral as well as the physical stamina of their existence, as only by doing so we can surely enable them to hold command—

“O'er the mind's sea in calm and storm,
O'er the heart's sunshine and its showers,
O'er Passion's moments, bright and warm,
O'er Reason's dark cold hours.”

The necessity of providing continuous education for these young persons, who may have already received an elementary education in our public schools, we have endeavoured to show, and we have also attempted to point out the importance of providing for the education of adults, or parents, if you will. In doing this we have not omitted to mention that many obstacles are to be first surmounted, ere we can be satisfied with the results of our labor, or produce among these classes a proper estimate of the value of education. The axe must be laid to the root. Years must roll on, labor, zeal, and energy must be exercised, disappointments must serve only to increase the labor, and invigorate those employed in the undertaking, liberal means must be devoted and the labourer be paid his hire, ere the working classes of Ireland can be brought to think that the improvement of their moral and social condition is an object of solicitude or consideration to those whom Providence has destined to be their governors. “Therefore it is,” speaks Lord Brougham, “that the importance is incalculable, of improving the minds of the parents themselves by the promotion of adult education.”* As already intimated,

* Speech on National Education, House of Lords, July, 1854.

evening schools can be made to supply the wants of a considerable portion of the industrious classes, whose education has been almost if not entirely neglected. But there are still required institutes on a broader basis, for the more intellectual members of this body, affording greater advantages than could be expected from the schools where elementary instruction only is given. What we urge and strongly recommend, in the Irish Metropolis especially, is an institute having for its object the continuance of that education, of which the foundation has been already laid in our primary schools, and at the same time affording an opportunity to the uneducated but well disposed adult, to commence the task which should have been learned in youth. We want an institute purely educational, thoroughly liberal and truly national. This is the class of Mechanics' Institutes which Ireland needs, and this class only will contribute to her advancement.

The Irish have at all times manifested a tact for Polemics, nor has this taste undergone any diminution among the operative classes of the present day. Wily politicians continue still to encourage and keep among them this, what we might term, national epidemic. Much no doubt must be done to abate their propensity to political and religious discussions. We do not look to stem the torrent of these discussions where such discussions are necessary, we know that controversy leads to the developement of truth in all matters. Yet when we see the classes among whom those discussions are carried on, and conscious of the unhappy feeling they engender in the hearts of those classes, we feel it but just to employ every means that would tend to prevent them, and contribute to make every man, no matter what his creed or sect, live in harmony and concord with his fellow man.

Let us then endeavour to do this—let us have mixed education for the adult as well as for the junior. Let the shepherds feed the sheep as well as the lambs, in a word, let the doors of knowledge be thrown open to the poor artizans of our country of every class, of every persuasion.—To do this, we must have Mechanics' Institutes conducted on principles free from sectarian spirit and party tendency. We have Model National Schools, why not a Model National Mechanics' Institute? We see, and hear of, the success of the former wherever they have been established; we are conscious of the great good they are effecting, but we deplore that means are not taken to make this good

more lasting. The absence, indeed the almost total absence, of the means of continuous education, renders the National System in Ireland incapable of conferring advantages it otherwise could extend. The importance of adult education is beyond all doubt,—its necessity unquestionable. The most enlightened give it their attention, aid in its formation, and come forward to advocate its cause. Among the resolutions laid before the House of Lords in July, 1854, by Lord Brougham, when speaking on national education, is the following:—

“That the indifference which has been found amongst the parents in many places to obtain education for their children, and a reluctance to forego the advantage of their labour, by withdrawing them from school, is mainly owing to the ignorance of the parents, and this can be best removed by the encouragement of a taste for reading, by the establishment of Mechanics' Institutes, Apprentices' Libraries, and Reading Rooms, and by the abolition of all taxes upon knowledge.”

Again, the Earl of Carlisle, showing the necessity for continuous education, when referring to those who have just left off attending our daily schools to follow their various vocations in life, declares,—

“Often, it seems to me, when we see or are brought into contact with any number of young persons, be it the work people in a large factory or the scholars in a large school, or any other assemblage of our fellow beings, about to enter on the great theatre of human life, and there to play their respective parts, we find ourselves disposed to pass beyond the present hour and the petty interests which may immediately engross us, to go out from ourselves, and enter into communication as it were with the quick-coming fortunes of our species. We cannot help travelling in thought over the parts that these before us may have to play on that swelling scene. Do we see in them the persevering agents of all our manifold and wondrous British industry. The skilful inventors of new instruments and methods—the vigorous colonizers of climes stretching under other unfamiliar stars—or else the leaders in unseemly brawls and boisterous revelries, the dark perpetrators of crime, the tenants of the felon's cell, the candidates for the hangman's gallows? They may now be at the very turning point from which to take one of these diverging paths. My attention has of late happened to be much occupied with the poet Gray, and the words of his most beautiful stanzas come almost unbidden to my lips, but it can be said with nearly more truth of any such assemblage of human beings left wholly uncared for and untended, than of any departed tenants of a village church-yard,—

‘Perchance in this neglected spot is laid
Some heart once pregnant with celestial fire,
Hands that the rod of empire might have swayed,
Or waked to ecstasy the living lyre.’

And what is the obvious moral from these well known lines? What but this,—that give the requisite opportunity, give the sufficient development, and then you may have at least the chance of detecting, unburying, these latent powers and hidden excellencies, of bringing them to the light of day, of calling them into real and beneficial exercise.”*

In our views on adult as well as continuous education, our readers will perceive that we are fully supported by, not only the noblemen just mentioned, but by other educationists of equally high authority. Having proved the necessity of Mechanics’ Institutes, we shall now proceed to offer a few suggestions on the manner in which they should be conducted in order to render them as much as possible adequate to the wants of the laboring and well disposed classes. By these classes we mean all whose occupation prevents their attending to education by day, and who are anxious to devote their leisure hours each evening to its acquirements.

In the first place, we hold the Institute should be educational in every point of view, and no person should be eligible thereto unless he become a member of one or the other of the classes opened in the Institute. This will show that his object is mental culture, and not the mere passing away of an idle hour on the stairs and lobbies of the building. Secondly, no person should be admitted who is not living by weekly wages; of course apprentices in every case should form an exception, but in no instance should employers be admitted unless as visitors. This suggestion may appear strange, but experience justifies us in urging it. It is evident, employers would be above receiving instruction in the same classes as those in which the poor adult or apprentice would be found. And even were they disposed to devote their leisure hours to the pursuit of knowledge, there are many other places affording the advantages of doing so. Again, we hold that employers should not be permitted to form a committee or board, to govern the Institute, nor would we have members of the working classes to do so either. In many parts of England we believe the management of Mechanics’ Institutes, and Public Reading Rooms, is left in the hands of the working man. Now we would be glad that this could be done in Ireland, but in our opinion it is so

* “Meliora” ii. pages 3 & 4.

impracticable that any effort made to effect it would be in vain. To have a Mechanics' Institute succeed in Ireland, men of influence and high position must take the reins of its government. The Irish deserve high patronage, and once procured they do all they can to merit its continuance. In fact we should set apart a Mechanics' Institute as much as possible for the Working Classes, and we believe, this can best be done by excluding all parties who do not live by weekly wages, and who are not known to be working men or apprentices. This will clearly show to the laboring hands that the institute is for their benefit only, which we have no doubt would be most powerful in inducing them to attend.

We would also urge that weekly payments should be adopted; our reason for this is,—to the working man or poor apprentice a few shillings are not at all times available, while a few pence out of their weekly earnings may be convenient at any period. By shewing the operative classes that you are consulting their interests you can best reckon upon their attendance to the Institute. Again, we would suggest that to the senior classes the respect that men should always have more than boys, should be given; and this will attract in a great measure the attendance of those more advanced in years. In no case, if it can be possibly avoided, should boys be allowed to intermix with adults while receiving instruction, for the latter always manifest the greatest unwillingness to assemble with the former in class teaching. In fact, this has been, and must continue to be a very great obstacle in the way of adult education.—We would therefore recommend separate apartments, or class or school-rooms, setting one aside for adults, and another for the more junior pupils, and it would perhaps be found advisable to name different times to admit and dismiss the classes. Indeed such an arrangement seems to us very judicious and one which if carried into effect would be attended with satisfactory results. In each Mechanics' Institute there should be one spacious and well ventilated room which would answer for a lecture hall or for any other purpose connected with the institute, and in no instance should it be devoted to meetings on any matter not bearing upon the business of the Institute.

We have stated, in a preceding part of this paper, that we did not advocate or desire to see opened Institutes solely Protestant or solely Roman Catholic. Nor do we want Institutes

where party politics and religious differences will interfere with their internal management.—No, what we want to see established in Dublin, and throughout the country, are, Mechanics' Institutes having for their object the improvement of the *minds* of our fellow creatures, and the elevation of their *moral* and *social* character. To effect these grand and laudable objects, all must agree that politics, and every thing bordering on religious hostility, must not only be not tolerated but totally excluded. These have ever proved the bane of every institution not only in Ireland but throughout the world. In England the most learned and the most philanthropic do all in their power to prevent their introduction into any educational Institute established to elevate the character of the operative classes of their country. Mr. Disraeli in his address to the members of the Manchester Athenæum, in October, 1844, attributes the decline of that model institute which but a short time previous was, to use his own words, “in the last stage of its fortune,” to the sectarian feeling that pervaded its management. We give the following extract from the address of the Honorable Gentleman, who no matter how people may differ from him on other points, all must acknowledge to be a most zealous advocate for the diffusion of knowledge, even among the poorest of his fellow creatures :—

“I would say in the first place, without imputing the slightest fault to the originators of this institution, wishing to be most distinctly understood as not only not imputing any fault to them, but most decidedly being of opinion that the fault does not lie at their door ; still, I cannot shut my eyes to the fact, that, in the origin of this institution, by circumstances not foreseen, and which certainly were not intended, a party, a limited and a sectarian feeling in some degree pervaded its management. * * * * There are some amongst us now, I know, who believe that the period has arrived when a great effort must be made to emancipate this country from the degrading thralldom of faction—to terminate, if possible, that sectarian and limited view, in which all human conduct is examined, observed and criticised—to put an end to that exclusiveness, which, in its peculiar sphere, is equally deleterious as that aristocratical exclusiveness of manners which has produced so much evil ; and, as far as I can offer an opinion, these views have met with sympathy from every part of the country.”

In the exclusion of Party politics, and sectarian principles from every Educational Institute, we are fully supported by the most learned, and the most wise, but to exclude them from an institute attended by the industrious classes needs, no doubt,

a wise and firm system of management. If every exertion were not made to suppress party spirit and factious feeling, instead of advocating the establishment of Mechanics' Institutes in the country, we consider we would be much wanting in our duty were we not to give them our most strenuous opposition. Ireland has suffered enough already from party feelings, and party intolerance—she is more than sufficiently pauperized now. Some effort should be made to remove the cause before we can expect the effect to cease; we must make the working classes understand the difference between their true and false interests, between their apparent and real friends. But to do this we must wean them from their old habits, gradually but effectively; we must point out to the son of toil, nobler and loftier occupation for his leisure hours than seeking after information that tends only to foster within his breast, feelings of political hatred and religious animosity towards his fellow men. In fact, unless every caution be taken and the greatest vigilance exercised to prevent political and religious discussions taking place within the walls of the Institution, and further, the exclusion from among those to whose hands its management would be committed, any person or persons evincing the least desire to advocate party feeling, the decline and certain fall of the Institute will soon become manifest. Should we ever see established for the working class of Dublin and other towns in Ireland, Mechanics' Institutes such as those whose opening we now advocate, we would say to them, in the words of Professor Nicholl,—

“ Mix not up your Society, directly or indirectly, with the church or religious politics of a candidate for a seat in your directions; do not ask of yourselves even to which of our various sects or churches he belongs; if you do, I prophesy for you, without the slightest misgivings, that this Institution will have no protracted existence. There must be no paltering or only half sincerity on this point. It is easy to see that the church with which a man worships ought never to be a reason for holding him unfit to sit at the council of a Society like yours, but neither ought it to be a reason why he should be there.”

It is unnecessary to dwell any longer on the importance of having Mechanics' Institutes non-sectarian, and free from any party politics. We now take leave of the matter in the confident expectation that this indispensable part of the management of the Institutions, the great necessity for which we are endea-

vouring to prove, will be fully and effectively carried out by those in whom the power to accomplish it may be vested. If this be done there is very little to fear for the success of Mechanics' Institutes, as they will then and then only assume the character of establishments having for their common character—the literary and scientific education of the working people. But to effect this object, first class instruction must be placed within their reach, and first class teachers must be had to impart it.

On the subjects that seem to us best calculated to meet the wants of the thinking part of the industrious classes in Dublin, and the large towns in Ireland, we would here offer a few observations.—The instruction given in Mechanics' Institutes needs to be of a more advanced character than that given in an Evening School. The very nature of things requires this, as has been already proved in a preceding part of this paper. Indeed, if it could be done, we would be in favor of having the class of instruction in the former such as would be required by pupils on their leaving the latter. This, perhaps, would not be doing justice to all parties, nor might it be prudent to introduce such an arrangement.

For instance, were an adult to present himself for admission to a Mechanics' Institute, he would feel it very humiliating if he were told that he should first graduate in an evening school, as he did not possess the necessary qualifications for a member. Now we believe this plan would never work, and therefore we urge the establishment of institutions that will afford an opportunity to the poor adult to learn to read, and at the same time afford advantages to the more advanced members of prosecuting their studies in those branches of knowledge, which they may have already entered upon. It is clear, then, elementary instruction must be afforded in such an institute, and also the courses of instruction of a much higher character must be taught. For the purpose of giving effect to these arrangements, it will be necessary to have the advanced members as much as possible apart from those learning the rudiments of knowledge, and though we strongly recommend an elementary evening school to be attached to every Mechanics' Institute, in no case we think should any pupil under sixteen years of age be admitted to either.

The course of instruction taught in Mechanics' Institutes should more or less depend upon the class of members attending; for we hold, unless the capacity of the pupil be

carefully considered, the exertion of the teacher, or the importance of the subject, will fail to produce the desired effect. Again, if we do not give the mechanic or artizan the knowledge that *he himself* says is most requisite for him, and best calculated to lead to the greater development of his craft, he will *not attend*. From our experience of those of the citizens of Dublin living by weekly wages, we are induced to recommend the following courses to be taught in a Mechanics' Institute :—

1st. Course. English Grammar, English Composition, Geography, Algebra, Geometry, (Practical and Theoretical) and Mensuration.

2nd. Course. French, Latin, Mechanics, Chemistry, and Astronomy.

It may be said that these courses comprise too many subjects, and the teaching of them would be carrying the education of the million too far. Well, those who entertain this opinion may do so, but for our part, we cannot see why the son of the mechanic should not be as eligible to receive instruction in any branch, as the child of the lawyer or surgeon. Of course, were we aware that the former was *destined* to follow, and never rise above the mere mechanical life of his father or grandfather, we might say, that to teach them many of these branches would be useless, and perhaps ridiculous.

But this we do not know, nor is it necessary we should, as our object in urging the opening of Mechanics' Institutes is to elevate and not depress, to encourage and not dishearten, to enlighten and not to keep in darkness, the working multitudes of our country, no matter what their position, no matter how low their birth. To extend the blessings of education to all, to disseminate the seeds of useful knowledge among all, to aid all in acquiring knowledge that will enable them to advance themselves in the world, and to afford them honorable and useful employment for their leisure hours, are the feelings which actuate us to advocate so warmly, the formation of what may be justly termed, Mechanics' Institutes for the operative classes of Ireland. We fully agree with the Rev. Dr. Hook, when he says that "we demand for the working classes, the best article," and we cannot see why it could not be procured for them, if proper means were resorted to. A great portion of the time of the working classes who have attended our daily schools, was devoted to the acquisition of the instruments of gaining knowledge, ra-

ther than that of knowledge itself. It is therefore clear, that if no facilities be offered for their application afterwards, we must expect the mind to degenerate ; and no matter how large may be the number of elementary schools, the intellectual portion of the laboring body must remain uneducated. Being fully aware of this, we have ventured to recommend an English course, which in our opinion appears best adapted for the class of persons for whose benefit Mechanics' Institutes are intended.

Indeed, were we advocates for having the poor and uneducated man's son no better than his father, or the laborer's son a mere laborer too, in fact, were we to have the condition of the lower classes of society to remain stationary, then we might put greater limits to the course ; or were we to entertain the same opinion held by Mr. Cobbett when he said, " It was highly injudicious to teach the poor people to aspire to anything but labour,"* we should oppose the diffusion of knowledge among all who have been born poor, and keep it in a storehouse for those who are fortunate enough to possess the *Cash* to purchase it. Popular education is too far in advance now, and its friends too numerous to permit this system of exclusion—we say with Archbishop Whately—" I wonder not much, considering what human nature is, that some should think the education of the poor an *evil* : I do wonder at their not perceiving it to be *inevitable*."

Before closing the part of our paper relating to the class of instruction that should be given in Mechanics' Institutes, a question arises,—Should the course of Education consist of English only ? We can in great truth inform our readers that we have given this matter our serious consideration for some time, and we might say for years, and the result of our consideration we shall now lay before them ; but before doing so we would have them to bear in mind, that we are now advocating the cause of continuous education, for those who have already passed through elementary schools, as well as the education of the poor adult, which may have been more sadly neglected.

Under such circumstances it must appear that persons will attend, whose vocations in life must widely differ, but who, nevertheless, form the working portion of the community. Of

* Mr. Cobbett's speech on Mr. Roebuck's motion for a committee to enquire into the state of English Education.

this there can be no doubt, since our readers are aware that we would have none eligible, except those living by their weekly earnings. We cannot expect to have all Mechanics, nor do we expect to have all clerks, all shop-assistants, all messengers, nor do we want such: but we must have all working for their bread, members of some class or other: this must be insisted upon, as it will be a safeguard against persons joining, through curiosity, or party intentions.

We have perhaps wandered too much from the result of our consideration, relative to the teaching of languages in these Institutes. But, duly considering all circumstances, we have come to the conclusion, that the French and Latin languages *at least* should be taught; but the reader will understand that by recommending those particular languages, we are not undervaluing others. Indeed we well know there are many young men in very humble circumstances in life, who would think no amount of time devoted to the pursuit of classical knowledge unprofitably spent. It must be remembered that we are not endeavouring to show the subjects which might be useful and desirable, but those which are requisite and suitable to the wants of the class who would attend to be instructed in them. We can best describe the education that we would have given, by using the words of Thomas Wyse, who writes"—

"The very first essential of the education for which we are contending is not its extent, nor its elevation, nor the number of things learned, nor their seeming importance, nor their facility—though all this be worth attending to—but, above all things, and in all things, its *applicability*."

It is our duty to provide for the educational wants of all, but at the same time we should first see that we have pupils, or at least a probability of having them, before we incur the expense of paying Masters to teach subjects that are not in great demand, among the classes likely to attend the Institutions which occupy our attention at present. This it is which makes us recommend the teaching of the French and Latin Languages only, at their starting; and were we not convinced of the importance, and the greatest estimation in which a practical knowledge of them is held, we would be inclined to confine the course of education in these Institutes to English subjects only. But no matter what may be the character of the instruction given, we should never forget that their principal object should be the "scientific cultivation" of the mind of the Mechanic; and we

would urge the teaching of those principles of science most nearly connected with the occupation of the pupil. By doing this we are not preventing other members from availing themselves of any advantages that these Institutes may afford. No, we would say to them, embrace every opportunity that we have offered to you to acquire that knowledge suited to your capacities and inclination; and we would adopt the sentiments of the Earl of Carlisle, when exhorting the junior members of the Manchester Athenæum to persevere, and addressing them in the words of Johnson, he said :—

————Proceed, illustrious youth,
And Virtue guard thee to the throne of truth !
Let all thy soul indulge the generous heat,
Till captive science yield her last retreat ;
Let Reason guide thee with her brightest ray,
And pour in misty Doubt resistless day.

But supposing that we offer advantages after advantages, suppose every subject that possibly could be mentioned was taught in these institutes, of what avail would it be if proper teachers were not procured, and a proper teaching system adopted. A system may be good we will grant, but it does not follow that a teacher acting upon it must be the same. “In a teacher is requisite not only a competent knowledge of his subject, but an aptness to teach, which can only be acquired, generally speaking, by those who make teaching their sole occupation and study.” A teacher of the working classes should be one competent to adapt his instruction to the position which his pupils hold or are likely to hold in life, otherwise let him not appear upon so important a stage. He must be a man of ability, energy and morality, having his heart in his high calling, and not one who looks on school-keeping as his last resource, after having evinced his incapacity for all other pursuits. In fact we hold that there could not be a calling in life more entitled to universal respect than that of a teacher, if honorably and honestly exercised. “There are few things,” speaks the eminent Professor Nicholl, “more to be wished than that some competent pen would assume the important task of critically examining how knowledge ought to be communicated to the various minds thirsting for it.” Again, in our views on this all important point, we are supported by the learned Professor Tyndall, who, when delivering his lecture on the study of Physics,

at the Royal Institution of Great Britain, thus speaks of the profession of a Teacher :—

“ If there be one profession in England of paramount importancy I believe it to be that of the Schoolmaster ; and if there be a position where selfishness and incompetence do most serious mischief, by lowering the moral tone and exciting contempt, and where reverence and notable truthfulness ought to be the feelings evoked, it is that of the governor of the school. When a man of enlarged heart and mind comes among boys—when he allows his being to stream through them, and observes the operation of his own character evidenced in the elevation of theirs—it would be idle to talk of the position of such a man being honorable. It is a blessed position. The man is a blessing to himself and to all around him. * * * * *

For no matter what means of culture may be chosen, whether physical or philological, success must ever mainly depend upon the amount of life, love and earnestness, which the teacher himself brings with him to his vocation.”

Would that the profession was as justly estimated by the State ; if it were, we should not see many an Irish teacher who would have been a credit to both his vocation and his country, compelled to seek the outdoor relief of the pauper, or humiliated to share the shelter of the Workhouse home. But a brighter day seems now to promise for them ; and it is with much pleasure we find ourselves in a position to state, that effective means have been latterly taken, by the Irish Commissioners of National Education, to alleviate their distress by increasing, as we are informed, the salaries of all teachers of National Schools in proportion to their various merits. By elevating the teacher in the social rank, you elevate his profession also, and this can be only done by giving him a salary commensurate with the importance of his vocation, and the duties he is called upon to discharge.

We will now proceed to offer a few observations on what must be an adjunct of paramount importance to every Mechanics' Institute—a Library. We know of no greater boon that could be conferred upon the intellectual poor, than placing within their reach the advantages of a well selected library ; nor do we know why such a public duty should have been so long overlooked. Here may the poor mechanic, during the intervals of toil, find something to soothe him, ere he retires to seek that repose—

“ When Labor's children sleep,
When Joy forgets to smile, and Care to weep.”

To the working classes there could not be anything of greater importance than the establishment of Free Libraries ; every effort, every pains should be taken to make these classes a Reading People. It is an object well worthy our attention, and one which if accomplished would more than compensate for any amount of toil employed in its achievement. What greater pleasure, let us ask, could there be to those who feel an interest in the social condition of the poor and fatigued man of toil, than to see him, at the close of each day, take his seat either in the Public Reading Room, or find him surrounded by his little ones on a winter evening, reading some amusing or interesting book aloud by his own fireside. Let us not be told that the poor artizans of our large towns cannot be made a Reading People. Afford them the advantages of becoming so, and no doubt their love of reading will soon manifest itself. The love of reading once diffused among the operative poor, it must necessarily have a most salutary effect. Its great benefit has been felt in England, and why should it not be in Ireland, if opportunity were offered? Lord Brougham, in his able speech on National Education, alluding to the Public Reading Rooms in Carlisle, says—"This at least is quite certain, that of the hundreds who belong to these libraries and reading rooms, none have even been suspected of joining in any corrupt proceedings, though from accidental circumstances a more than ordinarily long canvas preceded the last general election."

But let us enquire what the nature of the books should be composing a library calculated to suit the tastes of the working portion of the community? This is a matter that requires to be dealt with very cautiously, and one we would leave to be handled by special authorities, did not our subject demand from us our opinion on so important a point. Now, every educationist must admit that the more entertaining the book, the greater will be the demand for it. We are now writing, not of a library suited to the Philosopher, the Lawyer, the Doctor, or the Divine, but a library suited to the poor working man. To have such a library, you must first consult the tastes of those men whose attendance you are endeavouring to secure. To do this you must move among them, speak with them, or become acquainted with their character in every way possible. This, we assure our readers, we have endeavoured to do for many years, and from our experience we can say without fear of contradiction,

that to have the working classes of Ireland a reading people, we must first begin by placing within their reach books of an amusing more than a philosophic nature. Works of fiction will be eagerly sought for and greedily read by the people, and such works must be provided for them or else we fail in the undertaking. Now, be it understood, that we look upon the introduction of those books more as an inducement to secure their attendance, than as sources from which useful knowledge is to be derived. But, at the same time, it cannot be denied that much knowledge is to be derived from the reading of works of the better class of fiction, and their reading is often productive of great good. In our views on this point we are fully supported by Sir J. P. W. Herschell, no mean authority on such matters, who says :—

“In short, you will find that in the higher and better class of works of fiction and imagination duly circulated, you possess all you require to strike your grappling iron into their souls, and chain them willing followers to the car of advancing civilization.

When I speak of works of imagination and fiction, I would not have it supposed that I would turn loose among the class of readers to whom I am more especially referring, a whole library of novels. The novel, in its best form, I regard as one of the most powerful engines of civilization ever invented.”*

These are the words of one of the most eminent educationists of the age; no mere theorist, but one practically acquainted with the character of the labouring classes of his country. The reason for dwelling so strongly on this class of reading is, that it seems really the most powerful agent which we could employ to gain the attention of those whom free libraries are calculated to serve. Of course we would not wish to have a library, opened for the benefit of the poorer classes, to consist of novels only, no matter how good or how high their character might be; but we would urge their circulation on no niggard scale; for, unless we amuse in some way the mechanic after the weary hours of toil, we fear he will continue to seek amusement elsewhere, which no doubt will be attended with greater danger to his moral and intellectual culture, than the perusal of a novel coming from the pen of a Goldsmith or a Scott. We must have recourse to light literature if we desire to see the working classes a reading people, or to offer them inducements sufficient to counteract the attractions of the public

* “And with respect of fiction too, though I would not recommend it as giving the same healthy tone and nourishment to the mind as other

house or dram shop. The biographies of great men will also be read with remarkable avidity by the mechanic or the artizan, particularly if the names of such men be familiar to him : consequently, we would recommend the introduction of books of this nature into a Mechanics' Library. If, to the classes of books just mentioned, works of a scientific nature, treatises on practical subjects, the leading reviews, selections from travels, and the works of the eminent poets be added, we shall have a library that cannot fail to be regarded as an object of the greatest interest by every well-disposed member of the working poor.

We should be considered as having made a great omission when referring to the class of works that should constitute a library, a library for the working classes, were we to neglect offering some allusion to the introduction of News-papers. Now we do not deprecate the reading of news-papers, nor are we in any way opposed to such, but on the contrary look upon their reading in a most favorable light, and as a most powerful means of instructing man in the history of his age; but notwithstanding all this, we fear very much that their introduction into institutes, the opening of which we are now advocating, would be attended with very unsatisfactory results. No doubt there are many who entertain a different opinion to this, but it must be remembered that to educate and unite all parties, no matter what their creed or religious sects, are the motives that induce us to take up the subject of the present paper thus earnestly. To insure success in such an undertaking, we certainly think that the most prudent course would be to exclude from every institute, intended for the benefit of the Working Classes, all books and periodicals having a political or sectarian tendency. We are not the only advocates of such a course. Sir John Herschell, in his address delivered to the subscribers of the Windsor and Eton Library, thus speaks:—

“The caution which I would hold out is, that an extreme scrupulousness should be exercised, with reference to the admission of works on Politics and Legislation, into such a department. Indeed I should strongly advocate their exclusion altogether. * * *

more practical pursuits, yet I am pleased to think, especially in later times, that writers of fiction have treated it with so much refinement, and so much enlargement of view, that lessons may be derived from the best pages of the best writers of fiction, be they male or female, scarcely inferior to what can be derived from the study of facts.”—*Earl of Carlisle's Address at the Bradford Mechanics' Institute.*

We shall be taking on ourselves a deep responsibility, and one for which I may conscientiously, for my own part, say I am not prepared, by any step which may tend to interfere one way or the other, with the free formation of public opinion on such subjects; nor indeed can I conceive a more probable cause of disagreement among ourselves, which is of all things the most to be deprecated, than the discussions which might arise on this point—the only way to keep clear of which is to *exclude* such works altogether.”

There can be no doubt that the safest course would be that recommended here; in fact so strongly do we concur with this able authority, that we should give our strenuous opposition to the introduction of works of this nature. But, as we have already stated, it is not from any jealousy of discussion, or out of any spirit of opposition, that we recommend the non-introduction of News-papers,—we wish to prevent, as far as in us lies, an institute intended to be purely educational, from becoming the arena of political discussions and party manifestations. We do not desire men who join a Mechanics' Institute for the sake of reading News-papers—no, those are the very men that a Mechanics' Institute would do better without. The members we seek for are those whose object is the acquirement of knowledge of a loftier character than the mere perusal of a news-paper can bestow; and for such men, no matter how humble their station in life, we advocate the opening of Mechanics' Institutes and Free Libraries. We agree with the Attorney General for England, that by excluding news-papers from these institutes we are depriving the portion of the Working classes who would join them, “of one of the principal attractions to be found in Public Houses.” But if we can compensate them for it by placing in their hands works of equal interest and of greater general entertainment, we contribute to their social happiness and intellectual improvement much more durably and effectively; with more benefit to the man, himself, and with greater advantage to the commonwealth.

Scotland is an example worth our notice; Institutes of the first character exist in many parts of that country, and the noblest of her aristocracy are to be found presiding at the meetings of their members. It may not be out of place here to give the following extract from an address, delivered to the Members of the Glasgow Athenæum, by his Grace the Duke of Argyle, relative to newspaper reading:—

“Now the first advice which I would give to the young men of Glasgow would be this,—not to spend their time *too much*—I lay

stress upon the words 'too much'—not to spend their time too much in mere newspaper reading. I should have given this advice at any time, and upon any occasion on which I might have appeared before the citizens of Glasgow with a similar object in view ; but I have a particular desire to give this advice upon this occasion, because, at a late meeting of a similar institution in the city of Manchester, a person very eminent in the political world—I mean Mr. Cobden—gave a directly contrary advice. Mr. Cobden told the young men of Manchester, if I recollect his words, that no reading could be more useful than that of newspapers. Now, with all respect for Mr. Cobden, I wholly differ from such a sentiment. I do not wish to undervalue the high character and the very great ability of the better portion of the British Press. In that character we are all deeply interested, and we should be ungrateful if we did not acknowledge that that character does stand high. I will not hesitate to say that there are articles continually appearing in the daily press which, for vigour of expression and for grace of composition, are equal to the best specimens of English literature. All that I would say is—and I again repeat it—do not spend '*too much*' of your time in newspaper-reading ; and I give that advice upon this ground, that the knowledge which you acquire from newspapers is necessarily more or less of a desultory and superficial character. I would say then to the young men of Glasgow—if you wish to be living always in the present—if you wish to have the din of its contentions always in your ears, and the flush of its fleeting interests for ever on your brow—above all, if you wish to have your opinions ready made for you, without the trouble of enquiry and without the discipline of thought—then I say come from your counting-houses, and spend the few hours of leisure which you may have in exhausting the columns of the daily press ; but if your ambition be a noble one—if your aim be higher—you will often find yourselves passing from the door of the news-room into that of the library—from the present to the past—from the living to the dead—to commune with those thoughts which have stood the test of time, and which have been raised to the shelves of the library by the common consent of all men, because they do not contain mere floating information, but instruction for all generations and for all time."

From this extract it is manifest that the Duke entertains opinions quite at variance with those of Mr. Cobden relative to newspaper reading, and though we cannot altogether coincide with either gentleman, we must admire the principles of the former. But, it is probable, had his Grace been addressing a similar assembly of the young men at Dublin, he would have recommended the exclusion of newspapers altogether. On this point we have nothing further to observe, as it will be for those who may take up the matter to adopt or reject the suggestions we have made.

The primary cause of our advocating the opening of Me-

chanics' Institutes is to afford the mechanic, or any other working man those opportunities of mental culture and harmless amusement, which have been withheld to this period in Ireland, especially in its metropolis. And in order to protect the Institutes from the monopoly of persons in easier circumstances, we have recommended that none but those living by weekly wages should be considered admissible. The reason we assigned for this, seems to us a very palpable one, namely—that the presence of employers or superiors is calculated to prevent the attendance of the operative classes. This is not only the case in Ireland, but in England and Scotland also : Charles Knight, writing on Free Libraries, states—

“That the majority of Library Institutes in England comprise professional men, the higher shopkeepers and the managers of large firms ; that the clerk and the shopkeeper will not go where they have a chance of being looked coldly on by their employers or superiors in service, and resort to Mechanics' Institutes, where their presence effectually drives out the fustian jacket.”

Mr Knight is a warm advocate for Free Libraries, and his arguments in their favor show a thorough knowledge of his subject, and a consciousness of the great good they must necessarily effect among the operative classes of any country. “There could be nothing easier,” writes this gentleman, “than to make the National School a Free Library also.” We consider that such could be very easily accomplished, but not more so than to make the Mechanics' Institute the same.

We have now submitted to our readers our views on Mechanics' Institutes suited to meet the educational wants of the working classes of this country, and though we regret the smallness of the number, we must not deny that throughout Ireland there are to be found a “happy few.” In Clonmel, for instance, there is an Institute of which its supporters may feel justly proud. The Evening School attached to this Institute, we understand, is in connexion with the Commissioners of Irish National Education, and perhaps in Ireland there is not another school of a like character equal to it.

The influence that such Institutes, whose opening we so strongly urge, would have upon the operative portion of society, cannot fail to strike the most casual observer. “Great indeed,” says the learned Sheriff Allison, “are the results to public and private welfare which may be expected from the spread and success of such institutions, in which the real treasures of

genius are to be found, the fortunes of our descendants are wound up with their success." As an example of the influence that may be expected from these institutes, we shall here give our readers one instance which has occurred but a few years back.

At the time when the Commissioners of Irish National Education opened their Model School in Marlborough-st. for the education of the working classes in the evening, there attended a young man named Dunne, whose occupation was that of an ordinary day laborer. His anxiety to raise himself from this position manifested itself by his perseverance and assiduity in the acquirement of knowledge after the close of each day's work, so much so, that he enlisted the attention, and we may write, the admiration, of the Resident Commissioner, The Right Honourable Alexander Macdonnell (who is ever anxious to assist in raising the condition of those whose merit entitles them to it). Dunne, feeling this, continued to persevere, till in a short time he acquired knowledge sufficient to qualify him to take charge of a Village National School, to which he was appointed teacher by the Commissioners. This school is situated in Stillorgan, a village a few miles beyond Dublin, on the east side. After remaining at Stillorgan for some time, and discharging his duties with satisfaction to the Patron, justice to the pupils, and credit to himself, he emigrated to Australia, where he is now earning £300 per annum by school keeping. It would be a great injustice to this exemplary young man, were we to omit to mention, that since fortune favored him in a foreign land, he has sent several remittances to his family, amounting in all to about £90, and by means of which they were enabled to join him, and share in the justly earned fruits of his noble industry.

Here is an instance of the great good that can be effected by continuous education. It may be urged that this is a very singular case, and we are far from denying that it is. We do not want all labourers or mechanics to become schoolmasters, but we want to raise their social condition as far as circumstances will permit.

Now, in addition to what we have already written on the management of Mechanics' Institutes, we would suggest the following plan for adoption, as it strikes us to be a most powerful means to stimulate the young mechanic

to perseverance, and create in his bosom a spirit of emulation. The plan we allude to is—that each member be solicited to bring to the institute a specimen of the craft in which he is engaged, and at stated intervals that those specimens should be submitted to the inspection of competent judges, and premiums awarded to the successful competitors. Good results would certainly arise from this plan if once carried into effect, but in no case should any specimen be exhibited except by a member of the institute. Viewed in any light it will be seen that these institutes would be calculated to improve the character of the working classes, and conduce to their social welfare. An institute such as this we earnestly hope to see opened for the young mechanics and artizans of Dublin. But, instead of this, what have we?

An Institution bearing the title *Mechanics'*, a title which it can in no degree of justice claim. It is an assembly house for the middle classes, as may easily be discovered by any person visiting the Reading Room attached to it. The visitor will see there an assemblage of men of middle age, filling positions in society from which they derive incomes of some hundreds a year, while he is struck with the almost entire absence of the working mechanic or youthful apprentice. We admit that both one and the other are eligible to the institute, and we also admit the desirability of having an institute open to all classes; but we see the almost total impossibility of having men “with the honorable stain of labor on their hands and brows” intermix with fashionably attired gentlemen to whom daily toil is only known by name. It would unquestionably be a great advantage to have the employer and the employed assemble in the same institute; in fact, this is a system we would encourage, still, it was not designed by the originators of *Mechanics' Institutes*. No; these institutes were intended to benefit mechanics or men depending on their weekly earnings, and such only should be eligible thereto. That the so called *Dublin Mechanics' Institute* is not an educational institute, all acquainted with its character must admit, but that the common object of the gentlemen comprising its board is to render it so, no person can deny. Yet we cannot see how this object can be accomplished till the spirit of religious hostility and party feeling on both sides shall have passed away, and indeed we regret to observe that such has pervaded, and continues to pervade its management at the present moment. Much credit, no doubt,

is due to certain well meaning and influential gentlemen for their untiring efforts to suppress and eradicate from the institution those agents of its destruction, and which if allowed to continue, will render it inevitable. But if it is to succeed its success we *fear* must be attributed to the support of the middle ranks, who, we have just grounds to believe, are its main supporters at present.

The classes of this institute are attended by persons who should be made to seek instruction in other places more suited to their positions. We advert to this feature of its management because we are aware of the injustice done to the children of mechanics or workmen, who would be only too glad to send them to learn the subjects taught in many of the classes. But if the Dublin Mechanics' Institute were what its name imports, men of superior circumstances and high positions would not be allowed to join it for the purpose of having a "cheap read," and that their children might be taught accomplishments at a "cheap rate." To certain gentlemen connected with it we accord the praise that is justly due to them for the active and zealous part they have taken to reconcile its members on more than one occasion; yet we cannot but observe, and at the same time regret, that there are still connected with the Institution certain individuals who, it would appear, glory in disseminating discord and party feeling among those of the working classes who attend it. It is a subject of regret, as we have already observed, that such an Institute should be converted at times into an arena of party politics and religious bigotry. We are not now censuring any section, we are merely stating what we, and thousands of others, know to be the shameful fact. We know that the Mechanics' Institute of Dublin was originated, fostered and brought to a high position by some of the most benevolent and influential of our fellow citizens; that its board was composed of, and its affairs conducted by many who had but one object in view,—the welfare of the Mechanics. But unfortunately these gentlemen allowed some turbulent, disaffected individuals to steal in amongst them, who in the end drove the original founders out, and made the Institute designed for the good of the poor, a scene of politics and party spirit, a forum of debate for half-fledged orators, instead of a school of science for the working man. It is unnecessary for us to state how rejoiced we shall be when we hear of harmony and good will existing among the

members of this institution, and that discord and religious hostility shall be heard of no more. Its directors well know that facts speak more forcibly than speeches, however eloquent; knowing this it would be perhaps wise to prevent many of those would-be party leaders from delivering addresses calculated to create ill and envious feelings among the unwary and credulous portion of the members; for, to say the least of some of the meetings that have lately taken place in this institution, they were anything but creditable. Let us hope that we shall never witness such again. We shall now pass from it, and in doing so, wish that some steps may be taken to entitle it to the name it at present holds. If such be done there is no doubt that the number on *Rolls* in the English class will far exceed that given in the Directors' Report for last year, which we believe was THIRTY-SEVEN.

In a preceding part of this paper we stated that we did not desire Institutions devoted solely to the education of Protestants or Roman Catholics, but one for the benefit of all classes, without reference to any creed or sect. It is evident that an institute like this would be really National: to render it so we would strongly recommend that it should be placed under the Commissioners of Irish National Education: we care not what may be the objections urged against this, for our part we hold it to be the only way by which such institutes can be rendered successful. Experience has strengthened us in this view, and we could, if space permitted, adduce many cogent reasons for entertaining this opinion. Our readers well know that the National System is the only system suited to Ireland, and this time itself has sufficiently proved. Could the Commissioners be induced to give the matter their consideration, and open for the working classes of Dublin a Model National Mechanics' Institute, such as we have endeavoured to describe, there is no doubt it would be attended with the most signal success, if committed to proper managers and Trained Teachers. With the Commissioners are the confidence and well wishes of the vast majority of the Irish people. These they have justly earned, for till their appointment knowledge was as a sealed casket to the Irish poor, and there is every reason to believe it would continue so till this day, did not the Legislature extend its powerful arm and burst the seal. There never has been a greater boon conferred upon any country than National Education has proved to Ireland, and it affords us



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more than ordinary satisfaction to see such men as Sir John Pakington come forth to urge a similar system for England.

In closing our paper we would have our readers to bear in mind, that the grounds on which we urge the opening of Mechanics' Institutes are exactly those on which our Viceroy, the Earl of Carlisle, urged their encouragement and support, namely—"to raise the toiling masses of our countrymen above the range of sordid cares and low desires—to enliven the weary toil and drudgery of life with the countless graces of literature, and the sparkling play of fancy,—to clothe the lessons of duty and of prudence in the most instructive as well as the most inviting forms—to throw open to eyes, dull and bleared with the irksome monotony of their daily task-work, the rich resources and bountiful prodigalities of nature,—to dignify the present with the lessons of the past and the visions of the future—to make the artizans of our crowded workshops, and the inhabitants of our most sequestered villages, alive to all that is going on in the big universe around them, and amidst all the startling and repelling distinctions of our country, to place all upon the equal domain of intellect and of genius."
